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LECTURES
ON
CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

BY .
THOMAS M'CRIE, D.D.,


AUTHOR OF "LIFE OF THE LATE DR M'CRIE," "SKETCHES OF SCOTTISH CHURCH
HISTORY," ETC.

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TO THE
ELDERS AND MEMBERS
OF THE
CONGREGATION OF THE ORIGINAL SECESSION,
DAVIE STREET, EDINBURGH,
These Lectures,
SPECIALLY DESIGNED FOR THEIR BENEFIT,
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PREFACE.

THE following Lectures are published at the urgent request of many who heard them delivered. They are given nearly as they were spoken, though it was found necessary to introduce alterations in the phraseology and framework, which all who are acquainted with publication must have found more or less required, in preparing for the press what was originally intended only for the pulpit. Notwithstanding these adaptations to the character of a book, the Lectures, I am aware, still abound with those re-statements which naturally characterise productions brought forth at distant intervals, and adapted to a popular audience. Even this, however, which may be regarded as detracting from the merit of a regular treatise, may have its advantages in the present instance. What has hitherto rendered the discussion of Christian Baptism so dry and uninviting, has perhaps been the formal and didactic aspect it has assumed, and its being too often mixed up with the interminable replies and duplies of personal controversy.

The author is not so vain as to imagine that he has added any new or original arguments to a controversy which has been so often handled. What he has now published is the result of the readings and reflections of many years, and he must have unconsciously borrowed much from his predecessors. In one place, at the close of the Fourth Lecture, he has borrowed from himself, having, in the improvement, given the substance of an article written some time ago in a religious periodical. Nor is he ambitious enough to expect that he will make converts from the ranks of confirmed Baptists. He has long ceased to expect that any impression can be made on those who have fairly got within the disturbing influences of this "wind of doctrine." Such persons view every thing from a different position, and through a peculiar medium ; and from them he expects nothing but a repetition of the old queries which have been so often answered, and the misrepresentations which have been as often exposed. The author begs, however, to repeat here what he stated at the commencement of his course, that his object is not to make converts, but to instruct and establish those who may be adhering to the truth without sufficient investigation, and to guard them against rashly renouncing what they may have too lightly adopted.

On the subject in general, it is to be feared much ignorance and misapprehension prevail. The first and simplest of the Christian institutes has been involved in a labyrinth of metaphysical subtlety and theological dis-

cussion, the very aspect of which deters many from examining it. Public attention, however, has been lately turned to the question by two very opposite causes,—the secession, on the one hand, from the Church of England of a clergyman, who, from his gifts and graces, as well as his rank, formed one of its brightest ornaments, and who was at one time fondly expected to prove one of its most efficient reformers, but who has chosen to throw his influence into the scale of dissent, and is now expending his strength in battling for the peculiarities of anti-pædobaptism; and the threatened ejection, on the other hand, of another clergyman by the party holding the heresy of baptismal regeneration. To these sources of public interest, the author is inclined to trace the popularity of the Lectures when they were delivered; and they may still contribute to invite attention to them in their present form.

The question, though largely handled, seems still to admit of being discussed in a plain, popular, and practical manner, adapted to the comprehension of all. It is extremely difficult to speak on the point at all without offending cherished prejudices; and it is our special unhappiness in this question, that we are brought into collision with brethren whose personal piety and public zeal in the cause of Christ entitle them to the highest praise. But the interests of truth (and this seems eminently a part of “the present truth”) require that we should take up the question under this disadvantage; and it has been the author’s intention, how-

ever he may have succeeded in carrying it out, to avoid all uncharitable invective and needless irritation.

Into the Appendix he has thrown a few remarks on topics presently controverted, which could not so well be admitted into the Lectures.

In fine, the author commends these Lectures to the blessing of the Great Head of the whole family in heaven and earth, and to the candid perusal of all, with one of the Prayers anciently used at the celebration of baptism in the French and Scottish Churches:—
“Hear us, Father of mercy, that so the Baptism which we dispense, according to thy institution, may produce its fruit and virtue, in such sort as thou hast declared to us in thy Gospel!”

CONTENTS.

	Page
LECTURE I.—THE NATURE AND DESIGN OF THE ORDINANCE,	1
LECTURE II.—ON THE MODE OF CHRISTIAN BAPTISM,	24
LECTURE III.—ON THE SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM,	48
LECTURE IV.—OBJECTIONS ANSWERED,	85
LECTURE V.—ON THE EFFICACY AND BENEFIT OF BAPTISM,	115
LECTURE VI.—ON THE BAPTISMAL ENGAGEMENT,	135

APPENDIX.

NOTE A—JEWISH BAPTISM,	155
NOTE B—BAPTISMAL REGENERATION,	157
NOTE C—DR CARSON AND THE WORD BAPTIZE,	161
NOTE D—WILBERFORCE'S MISREPRESENTATION OF LUTHER,	165
NOTE E—NOEL'S ESSAY ON CHRISTIAN BAPTISM,	171
NOTE F—BUNYAN AND HIS BAPTISM,	174





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LECTURES ON CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

LECTURE I.

THE NATURE AND DESIGN OF THE ORDINANCE.

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”—MATT. xxviii. 19, 20.

FROM these words, my friends, I propose to give a few Lectures on Christian Baptism. I shall not, at present, enter on any consideration of the passage itself, as this would at once involve us in controversy. All we shall say of it is, that it contains Christ’s commission to baptize his disciples—that it prescribes the formula of its administration—that it enjoins the teaching of the Word in conjunction with this sacrament, and the duty of observing this, as well as all Christ’s institutions according to his appointment—and that it plainly intimates that this ordinance shall continue side by side with the preaching of the gospel, and the promised presence of its Author even unto the end of the world. This passage, then, so rich at once in precept and in promise, may be fairly made the starting-point of these lectures; it may serve, at the same time, to guide us in our course; and we trust that, ere we conclude, we may be enabled,

under the guidance of the Spirit, to reach its full meaning, and realize its blessedness.

Taking for granted, what is not generally denied among us, the obligation of baptism as a permanent institution in the Church, we propose in this lecture to explain the nature and design of the ordinance.

What is baptism, then? This question we shall answer in the following observations:—

1. Baptism is *the outward symbol or badge of Christian discipleship*.—Nothing can be simpler than this, the original design of the rite. The ceremony of baptizing a person in the name of a teacher of some new doctrine, or author of some religious sect, in token of discipleship, was quite customary among the Jews. This appears from the language in which they addressed John the Baptist, “Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?” They were surprised to find that he denied himself to be any of these characters; but, on the supposition that he was, they were quite prepared to find him baptizing; for this was the ordinary badge by which teachers distinguished their followers. The Jews, it appears, were in the habit of baptizing proselytes. Such a ceremony does not appear indeed in the law of Moses; but being one of those innocent or indifferent actions familiar to the Jews, our Lord was pleased, after dropping circumcision, to adopt baptism as the symbol of the Christian profession.*

Baptism is thus an ecclesiastical symbol. It stands related to the Church of Christ viewed as visible. There would have been no such thing as baptism had there not been a visible Church—an organized society, separated from the world and devoted to God, possessing

* See Note A—*Jewish Baptism*.

external privileges, intrusted with solemn responsibilities, necessarily mixed and imperfect in its composition while in this world, capable of extension and diminution, of being discerned by the eye, supported by outward means, and defined by outward marks. Baptism implies the existence of such an association, and in its primary design it serves simply as an outward badge to distinguish Christians. It is the symbol of their real separation from the world. From its very nature, as a visible material symbol, it must stand in relation to the Church as visible ; and, so far as we can judge from it, no conclusion can be drawn as to the spiritual character of the receiver. It is no evidence of a man being a true Christian or regenerated, that he has been baptized, at whatever age or in whatever mode the ceremony has been dispensed. Simon Magus is a standing proof that baptism, administered even by apostolic hands, may leave a man exactly where it found him, “in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.” We may apply to the baptized Christian what the apostle says of the circumcised Jew :—“He is not a Christian who is one outwardly ; neither is that baptism which is outward in the flesh : but he is a Christian who is one inwardly ; and baptism is that of the Spirit, and not of the letter ; whose praise is not of men, but of God.”

Baptism, then, viewed in this light, is merely a Church ordinance—the outward sign of admission into the pale of the Church. It is not the Christian profession, but merely the symbol of that profession ; not admission into the Church, but the sign of our admission. And I may add that, so far from its insuring admission into the Church viewed as invisible, it does not even constitute the person a member of the Church viewed as visible.

It is, indeed, the Church's act of admission; but it implies that the person thus formally admitted is already, in point of right and of fact, a member of the Church. Baptism is only the recognition of this right and the proclamation of this fact, declaring that the person is a member of Christ's Church—putting the badge on one who is already, in some sense, recognised as a disciple of Christ.*

2. Baptism is *a symbol of spiritual blessings*.—We can suppose it possible that, when appointing a badge to distinguish his followers, our Lord might have selected some indifferent rite, to which no meaning could be attached, and of which no superstitious use could be made. But it seems more in harmony with his wisdom and grace, that God, when instituting symbols at all, should impart to them a significant character. In condescension, therefore, to our weakness, and for the strengthening of our faith, he has been pleased to represent spiritual things by sensible symbols.

The baptismal service is plainly symbolical, pointing in outward semblance to things spiritual and unseen. The body of the baptized represents the soul, which is the principal subject of gospel blessings. The element is simple *water*, which symbolizes the blood of Christ in its purifying efficacy. The action of applying the water to the person symbolizes the saving application of that blood by the grace of the Holy

* The term *Christening*, vulgarly applied to this ordinance, if it mean any thing else than this appending of the Christian badge—if intended, as it generally is, to convey the idea that baptism *makes the child or the man a Christian*, either visibly or invisibly—is purely nonsensical, and ought on this account, as well as from its abuse, to be avoided. Baptism no more makes the Christian, than the livery makes the servant, or the uniform makes the soldier.

Spirit. And this being done in the name of the Trinity, audibly pronounced in the act of baptism, symbolizes the dedication of the person to the service of God in Christ. Hence our Catechism teaches, that "Baptism is a sacrament, wherein the washing with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, doth signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord's." Union with Christ is the great blessing symbolized in baptism. It is the sacrament of union, and thus differs from the Eucharist, which is the sacrament of communion. It is the initiatory sign; it meets us, like the ancient laver, at the very door of the sanctuary. The benefits of the new covenant which it mainly represents are, therefore, regeneration and the remission of sins. And not only is it the symbol of the benefit, but of our partaking of the benefit. Here, however, let it be carefully observed, that when we speak of baptism as the sign of regeneration and pardon, we do not mean that it declares or attests that the person baptized has been regenerated and pardoned of God. Some may say, when we baptize a person, *we mean* to say that he is a regenerated person, or that we have reason to believe him such. But we have nothing now to do with the meaning of the administrator, but with the meaning of the symbol itself. Baptism is certainly the symbol of regenerating grace, but merely the symbol; and there is nothing in the symbol itself which implies or declares that the person to whom it is administered is a partaker of that grace. To hold this, would be to confound the sign with the thing signified—a mistake which lies at the root of all the superstitious

abuses of the ordinance. For it matters not whether we hold with the Romanists that baptism is a sign that grace has been conferred in the act of baptizing, or with others, that it is a sign that grace has been conferred before it was administered. In both cases, we lose sight of the proper use of a sign, which is, *not to attest a fact, but to symbolize a blessing*—not to declare that some grace has been conferred, but simply to exhibit in a visible emblem the spiritual grace itself, at whatever time it may be conferred.

Viewed in this light, baptism is *a most instructive symbol*. When administered as it ought to be, in the presence of the Church, and not in holes and corners, it teaches us many important lessons. It teaches the necessity of regeneration. It symbolically proclaims our original depravity, and preaches on the text, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” It shows that provision has been made in the covenant of grace for pardon and purification. As the Ethiopian said, “Lo, here is water!” so may we say, “Lo, here is blood!—Lo, here is a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness!” It inculcates the necessity of the application of that blood by the Spirit. It is a symbolical pledge of our adoption into God’s family. And to all who have been called, “through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ,” it visibly holds out the friendly salutation, “Grace unto you and peace be multiplied!” In short, baptism is the whole gospel symbolized, the gospel in an emblem—not indeed an empty emblem, as we shall see, but a sacramental gospel. Only in this respect does it differ from the sacraments of the Old Testament, that they

pointed to Christ as yet to come; while baptism points to him as already come, and so, like the gospel itself, it directly "publishes peace and salvation."

3. Baptism is also *a seal of the covenant of grace*.—In applying this term to it, we are guided by the example of the apostle when speaking of circumcision, which, as given to Abraham, he calls both a sign and a seal. "And he received the *sign* of circumcision, a *seal* of the righteousness of the faith which he had, being yet uncircumcised."—(Rom. iv. 11.) If circumcision possessed, in the case of Abraham, the character of a seal in relation to his covenant, we are warranted by analogy to apply it in the same sense to baptism. To talk of circumcision having been given as a seal to Abraham alone, because it is said to have been to him "a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, being yet uncircumcised," is to raise a mere quibble on the language of the apostle, perverting it to a purpose which he never intended. All he means to show is, that in receiving circumcision Abraham received the seal of a covenant, in the blessings of which he was previously interested by faith. But, does it therefore follow that it was not in itself a seal of the covenant made with Abraham, and with his posterity? And were not Isaac and Jacob, "the heirs with him of the same promise," entitled to regard it in the same light? And in what possible sense could circumcision be even to Abraham a seal of righteousness or justification? Not surely in the sense of declaring or attesting him to be already a righteous person, else in giving circumcision to his posterity the same attestation would be given to them all; but simply as a confirmation of his faith in the promise of God, for in receiving this

seal Abraham was only receiving the confirmation, not of the righteousness properly, but “*of the faith* which he had, being yet uncircumcised.” *

But the mere term is a matter of less consequence, provided that the thing signified is understood and granted. Be pleased, then, to mark the sense in which we understand the word *seal* as applied to baptism. The term is used in three senses in Scripture. The first is in the sense of *security*, as when a person seals a letter. “The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.”—(2 Tim. ii. 19.) The second is in the sense of *distinction*, as when a merchant puts his seal on his goods to appropriate and distinguish them. “In whom after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.”—(Eph. i. 13.) The third is in the sense of *confirmation*, as when a seal is affixed to a charter or bargain. “And because of all this we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it.”—(Neh. ix. 38.)

Now, in applying the term *seal* to the ordinance of baptism, it is not either in the first or second senses here noticed that we are to understand it. It is not used in the sense of securing the person, or of distinguishing him from others. Baptism is not an assurance of salvation to any, or a pledge of sonship. In this sense it is the Spirit alone that is the seal of God’s people. It is in the third sense only, namely, in that of the confirmation of a deed, that we use the term in relation to baptism. It is the seal which God has been pleased to append to the charter of his covenant. It is not like the signet which

* These remarks were chiefly intended to meet the objections of Dr Halley of Manchester, a congregationalist, who strangely enough argues, that circumcision was not a seal to any but to Abraham.—*Lectures on the Sacraments*, p. 99, &c.

Pharaoh put on the hand of Joseph as a badge of distinction, or like the ring put on the hand of the penitent prodigal in token of acceptance; it is rather like the signet by which King Ahasuerus sealed the letters which saved the Jews from destruction.

Thus, while baptism viewed as a symbol has a relation to the grace of the covenant, viewed as a seal it stands related to the covenant itself. We must carefully distinguish between *the grace of the covenant*, and *the covenant of grace*. Baptism is the sign, but it is not, properly or directly, *the seal of regeneration*;—it symbolizes the blessing, but it seals the covenant. By keeping this distinction in view, you will save yourselves from a world of confusion. By not attending to it our views have been sadly misrepresented.* The distinction is very obvious. As a symbol, the ordinance addresses itself to the senses; as a seal, it appeals to faith. As a symbol, it is a badge of distinction from the world; as a seal, it stands related, not to the person, but to the covenant. A seal implies something spoken or written; and the design of baptism as a seal, is to confirm the faith of the Church in God's written Word, in his everlasting covenant with her. It is the visible pledge

* For brevity's sake, as in our Shorter Catechism, baptism may sometimes be said to "signify and seal" spiritual blessings. But it is obvious it cannot *seal* in the same sense that it *signifies* them. Dr Halley has, however, supposed us to hold this absurd notion. This mistake pervades the whole of his ingenious lectures. "If baptism is the seal of regeneration," he says, "it should be administered only to the regenerate." And he then launches out into a discourse on "the genuine seal of *the Spirit*"—"that blessed obsignation" which, if we possess, we have "no need of a sacramental seal." It is plain he has never adverted to the distinction stated above, the justness of which, when once pointed out, we cannot suppose him so obtuse as not to perceive, or so uncandid as not to acknowledge.

added to the verbal promise. And where is the inconsistency of supposing that God may ratify his word by an outward symbol? Has he not “confirmed his promise by *an oath*, that by two immutable things, wherein it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation?” And why not also confirm it by a seal? All bonds and covenants are thus confirmed, and God never made a covenant yet without a seal. The tree of life was the seal of Adam’s covenant, the rainbow was the seal of Noah’s, circumcision was the seal of Abraham’s, and baptism is the seal of Christ’s.

In accordance, therefore, with the very design of a sacrament, as well as with the uniform doctrine of the primitive church and of our reformers, we maintain that baptism is not merely a symbol of spiritual grace, but is the seal of God’s holy covenant.* And remember it is God’s seal. It is not the baptizer’s, nor the baptized’s, but God’s only. Its validity is independent of man’s act. God delivers the promise signed and sealed, presenting it to all, and saying, “Here is my salvation: behold the seal of the King!” And there it stands, sealed and sure, whether we accept or reject it. “If we believe not, he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself.”

4. Baptism is an ordinance of *consecration to God*.—It implies “our engagement to be the Lord’s.” This flows from its very nature as the symbol of Christian discipleship, and the sign and seal of the Christian covenant. The person is baptized “in the name of the

* “The *inviolable seal* of the new covenant.”—*Basil*. “In the sacrament of baptism, God binds himself to thee in a covenant full of grace and consolation.” “God is faithful to his promises, the sign of which I have received in baptism.”—*Luther*.

Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ;” that is, dedicated to the service of the true God as he is revealed in Jesus Christ. “As many of you as were baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.” “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death ; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

It appears from these and other passages, that baptism is an ordinance in which we are not properly *actors* but *recipients*. We do not *baptize ourselves*, we are *baptized*. The person may be *capable* of active obedience or he may be *incapable*, he may be *voluntary* or *involuntary* in receiving baptism ; but still it is a *receiving* of baptism, and in receiving it he is not active but *acted upon*. In this respect there is a great difference between this sacrament and that of the Lord’s Supper, which requires activity in the receiver. In regard to the Supper, the command is addressed to the Christian, “Do this,” and the communicant actively “shows the Lord’s death.” But in baptism, the command is addressed to the apostles and ministers of Christ, “Baptize them,” and the baptized one is not required to do any thing ; there is something done to him ; he is “baptized in the name of the Lord.” And the reason is, that the Eucharist is the symbol of communion with Christ ; baptism is the symbol of union to Christ. The one is the sign of the Christian life, and is therefore an institution of frequent and continued observance ; the other is the sign of Christian birth, and is therefore dispensed once for all. The one is the emblem of “walking in newness of life,” which implies activity ; the other is the emblem of regeneration, in which we are the passive recipients of grace. “Except a man *be born* of water and of the Spirit, he cannot

see the kingdom of God." In the Supper, we "present our bodies to God, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable through Jesus Christ, which is our reasonable service." In baptism, again, we are dedicated to God. In fine, so far as the outward meaning of the ordinance is concerned (and it is of importance to mark the distinction, and not allow ourselves to be confounded with vague general statements on either side), God may be seen, symbolically and sacramentally, in the act of conferring upon us the benefits of the new covenant, and therefore putting his own seal upon us. We do not seal ourselves; we are sealed. We do not consecrate ourselves; we are consecrated. All who have been baptized may say with David, "O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid."—(Psa. cxvi. 16.)

5. Baptism is *an ordinance of salvation*.—Like all the other ordinances of the gospel, it has not only God as its author, and truth as its matter, but salvation as its end. The Papists taunted our Reformers with having reduced the sacraments of the New Testament to mere empty symbols, and reducing them to a level with the shadows of the ancient economy. The reply to this was, that no ordinance of the gospel could be termed a mere symbol, inasmuch as it is connected with the promise of grace. And in this respect did they distinguish the sacraments of the New Testament—not indeed from the sacraments of the Old Testament, which they held to be as much connected with the gospel of the grace of God as those of the New—but from the types and figures of the Mosaic law. These, indeed, were shadows, and only shadows of good things to come. They were not only emblems, but emblems of an unfinished atonement. They left sin unwashed away. There was therefore no

promise of forgiveness attached to them. They had no sealing or sacramental character.* But Christian baptism must be an ordinance of salvation, because it is appended to the promise of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Here, however, it is necessary to guard against misconception, both on the right hand and on the left; for such is the tendency of man to mistake in the things of God, that some make so much of the symbol that they would carnalize the grace, while others make so much of the grace that they would spiritualize the symbol.

(1.) *Baptism does not save from any virtue in the mere baptismal act.*—This is the doctrine of the Church of Rome, which maintains that the mere act of baptism, or, as she calls it, the *opus operatum*, confers grace. This theory is inconsistent with the very nature of a sacrament, and it is wholly at variance both with the letter and spirit of the gospel. It is inconsistent with the nature of a sacrament, which consists of two things, an outward sign, and an inward grace signified thereby. But to maintain that whenever the sign is administered the grace is bestowed, is to confound the sign with the thing signified. And the notion is incompatible with the gospel, both in its letter and spirit. “It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing.” “In

* “It is a mistake to suppose that the *sacraments* of the new law differ from those of the old in point of efficacy of signification. In this the legal *figures* differ from those of the New Testament, that the former had not the word of promise annexed to them, which requires faith; they were not signs of justification, because they were not sacraments of faith, but of works. But our sacraments, and those of the patriarchs, have the word of promise annexed to them. And hence the proverb, ‘It is not the sacrament, but the faith of the sacrament that justifies.’”—*Luther. De Captiv. Babyl. Scrip. Latin.* tom. ii. 292.

Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing nor uncircumcision, but a new creature, and faith that worketh by love." To imagine that any mortal man, be he bishop, priest, or presbyter, can, by applying a little water to the body and pronouncing a few sacred words over it, wash away the guilt and pollution of the soul in the sight of God—can regenerate, absolve, and save the sinner—is a piece of the merest folly and presumption. It is subversive of the whole gospel scheme of mercy. It is a puerile and senseless figment, worthy only of the dark ages in which it originated, but utterly unworthy of a rational mind or an enlightened age. It is an impious pretence to bind the Almighty by the act of man, and, reversing the appointed order, to convert the Most High into a servant in waiting, ready, at the beck and bidding of any poor profligate priest, to impart his saving grace. It is worse than Judaism; for the most carnal Jew that every trusted in the law never expected more from his cleansings than to be "sanctified to the purifying of the flesh." In short, under pretence of exalting, it debases the blessed institution of heaven, by converting it from a rational service into a mere cabalistic charm. In close connection with this, we remark that,

(2.) *Baptism is not regeneration.*—These two things have been confounded by the doctrine of *baptismal regeneration*, or the doctrine that regenerating grace is conferred in the act of baptism. This idea is, in reality, founded on the absurd Romish fiction to which we have just referred; for although it may be held that baptism is merely the means or channel through which divine grace is conveyed, yet so long as it is maintained that as often as the sign is administered the grace is conferred, it amounts to an ascription of regenerating virtue to the

opus operatum, or mere act of baptizing. It is absurd to talk of "baptismal grace," as if it were something distinct from the grace of the gospel. We might as well talk of "verbal grace," or "oral grace;" for the same saving grace which is promised in the Word and preached in the pulpit is symbolized in the sacrament. But it is not tied to the one ordinance any more than to the others; nor can it be insinuated into the nature of man by mere bodily contact with the waters of baptism, any more than by mere bodily contact with the external atmosphere in the act of reading or hearing the gospel. This fatal heresy lies at the root of all the abominations of the Church of Rome. It is granted that it began to appear at a very early period in the history of the Church. And it is truly painful to observe how soon the unguarded language of the early fathers, who were in the habit of speaking of the sacraments by the names of the graces which they symbolized, was abused to shelter baptismal error. As true religion declined, superstition gradually substituted the form in place of the spirit, until at length, as seen in the vision of the prophet, the glory departed from Israel, leaving nothing behind but the empty symbols. The Church of England at the Reformation did not altogether lay aside the use of expressions in her services, which seem very inconsistent with other expressions in her Articles, and give too much countenance to the dogma of baptismal regeneration. On this question we need not enlarge.* Suffice it here to remark that baptism is the sign of regeneration; it is not regeneration itself. The passages of Scripture on which this dogma is made chiefly to rest,

* The question is resumed in the Lecture on the efficacy of baptism.

might be shown to have no reference to baptism whatever. One of these is our Lord's saying to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."—(John iii. 5.) Now, let us compare this with Matt. iii. 11, "I indeed," said John the Baptist, "baptize you with water unto repentance, but he that cometh after me is mightier than I; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." It cannot be reasonably supposed that John here contrasts his baptism with Christian baptism. If so, it is not likely he would have spoken of "fire" as the element of the latter. He obviously speaks metaphorically of the Spirit whom Christ would pour out on his Church. And to express in the strongest terms the superiority of Christ, he employs an Hebraic mode of speech, quite common in the New Testament, to denote the mode of the Spirit's operations, according to which, to be baptized "with the Spirit and with fire," is just to be baptized with the Spirit *as with fire*, or acting like fire,—an element more potent in purifying virtue than water.* In like manner, to be born of water and of the Spirit, is just to be born of the Spirit acting like water, in purifying the soul as water does the body. If our Lord had any reference to Christian baptism at all in this passage (which is not very probable, seeing it had no existence at the time when he spoke, and Nicodemus could hardly have been blamed for not knowing about an ordinance which was not instituted till after our Lord's resurrection), it must have been a very distant allusion, and even then only as a symbol of the purifying efficacy of his Spirit. And it is remarkable, that

* See this passage explained learnedly, and at length, by Marck in his *Scriptur. Exercitationes*, Par. iv.

among the many strong declarations of our Lord on the requisites of salvation, we never find him, in any other instance, insisting on baptism as essential to regeneration. The other passage usually adduced is Titus iii. 5, "He hath saved us by the washing of regeneration"—that is, say they, we are saved by the baptism of regeneration. Even this rendering would not amount to an identification of the mere rite with regeneration; but it is extremely doubtful, to say the least, if there is any allusion here to baptism at all. The regenerative "washing," as well as the "renewing," is applied to the Holy Spirit, which, as it follows, "he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ, that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." It is not by the symbolic waters of baptism, but "in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God," that we are "washed, and sanctified, and justified." And to suppose that in this passage of Holy Writ, so pregnant with spiritual meaning—intended to exclude all "works of righteousness which we have done" from the grounds of salvation—and in which no mention is made of any of the other means of grace, not even the Gospel or the Eucharist—Paul should have dragged in the "baptistery" or the "laver of baptism," with the puny *opus operatum* of man's washing, would be to charge the blessed apostle with truly pitiable affectation, and a very wretched "daubing with untempered mortar!" It need hardly be added, that wherever baptism may be elsewhere conjoined with the "washing away of sins," it must be understood in the same sense, merely as the symbol of the real internal purification.

(3.) *Baptism does not necessarily presuppose regeneration.*—This extreme lies in the opposite direction from

the former, and we have already anticipated it. It proceeds on the erroneous idea, that we are bound to decide on the regeneration of all who apply for baptism. It assumes that the Church decides this point in the act of baptizing; and certainly, after such a solemn attestation of the fact, it would hardly become the person himself to call it in question. At the same time, it would imply that, if he should subsequently, as may often happen, give incontestable proof of having "neither lot nor part in this matter," his baptism must be held invalid, and before he could again be admitted to the Church, he must be rebaptized, seeing that the Church had, in this case, put its imprimatur on a blank. But we have seen that baptism is simply the symbol of Christianity; that though the symbol points to regeneration as necessary and as provided in the promise, it does not attest the fact of the person being regenerated; and that, as a seal, it can never be said to be appended to a fiction or a blank, seeing it is appended, not to the person, but to the covenant which is "ordered in all things, and sure." Personal assurance of salvation through Christ is a precious doctrine of the gospel; but it is an assurance with which nobody has to do but the Christian himself and his Saviour. "He that believeth hath the witness in himself." This assurance is doubtless one of the ends designed by the sacrament; but it is an end which it only indirectly secures. I see God in the sacrament ratifying his covenant, appending his seal to it as his own, and as true; and thus, by a believing improvement of my baptism, I may be encouraged and confirmed in a gracious sense of being his.

Should it be objected here that faith is required before baptism, as it is said (Mark xvi. 16), "He that believeth

and is baptized shall be saved," and that faith implies regeneration;—we answer (without entering now into the question of infant baptism into which this would lead us) that all that this passage tells us is, that baptism and believing are necessary *to salvation*. This, however, can only apply to the adult; none can surely be so heartless and absurd as to apply it to children. From the mere collocation of the terms it would be rash to draw any doctrine; as it would hold equally true, in regard to the adult, that "he that is baptized and believeth shall be saved." A strange confusion of ideas results from misapprehension of this passage. It is surely one thing to say that faith is *essential to salvation*, and a very different thing to say that *faith is essential to baptism*. Baptism may *teach* us that faith is essential to salvation; and therefore, as administered to the adult, it is highly proper to require a *profession* of faith before the administration of the ordinance. But there is nothing in the nature or design of baptism itself, whether administered in childhood or maturity, which necessarily presupposes the existence of faith in the recipient, though it certainly presupposes that, in the case of adults, they must believe before they can be saved.

(4.) *Baptism is not essential to salvation*.—It is a vulgar error, borrowed from Popery, that a child unbaptized cannot be saved, or at least must be left to something called the uncovenanted mercy of God. The child may be saved, as well as the man, if he is interested in God's covenant, though he may not have received its outward symbol. It is hazardous to assert of any particular ordinance that it is essential to salvation. It is still more presumptuous to assert this of a mere sign of salvation. Simon Magus perished, we

have reason to fear, after baptism ; the thief on the cross was saved without it. The hearing of the Word preached is more indispensable to salvation than baptism (Rom. x. 14) ; but even this is not absolutely necessary in the case of the infant, or of the deaf, or of those who do not enjoy the gospel ministry.

Since, then, baptism is not regeneration, and is not essential to salvation, in what sense, it may be asked, do we call it an ordinance of salvation ? We answer at once, In the same sense and in the same way that the Word preached, or any other ordinance, is an ordinance of salvation, namely, "by the blessing of Christ, and the working of his Spirit in those that by faith receive it." It is astonishing that any professing evangelical sentiments should affect to make a mystery of this question, as if baptism must operate differently from any other ordinance, merely because, instead of speaking to us in words, it speaks to us in a symbol. Baptism preaches to us the same Christ and the same salvation as the gospel, and must save in the same way with the gospel, which it attests. The apostle Peter, comparing baptism to the ark, has said, "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth now save us." Baptism is a "like figure," an emblem corresponding to the ark. Not that the ark was an emblem of baptism ; but that both are emblems of salvation, and that even as the ark saved Noah in a figure, as being an emblem to him of salvation by Christ, so baptism saves us in a figure, as being an emblem to us of the same salvation. The salvation of Noah by the ark was an emblematical or sacramental salvation ; and so is our salvation by baptism. It is salvation in a figure, in a sacrament.

Baptism may, therefore, be truly called an ordinance

of salvation, both as a sign and as a seal. As a sign it exhibits the blessings of the new covenant to our faith ; and in this sense, its saving meaning can only be realized when the benefits of pardon and purification are bestowed on the person, which may not be till long after the celebration of the ordinance. As a seal, it is a confirmation to the person of the covenant itself, and in this sense it may also redound to his salvation, as we shall afterwards show. Meanwhile, it will be granted by all who know the gospel, that the benefits resulting from this ordinance cannot be confined to the mere moment of baptismal ablution. They will allow that the main point is the subsequent improvement of the rite once administered ; and that in reflecting on this, the Christian will best realize the efficacy of the ordinance, for edification and comfort, by thinking of it, not as his own act, but as a fact in his history—not by attempting to revive any feelings he may have experienced at the baptismal font, but by meditating on the privileges and obligations that have resulted from his having been “baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

In concluding this part of our subject, we may learn that it is a great mistake to suppose that we enhance the value of this sacrament by putting it out of its proper place, and confounding it with the grace which it symbolizes. In this way we may dishonour the Spirit, but never exalt his own ordinance. None could entertain a higher estimate of the gospel ministry than Paul, and when necessary he would glory in it ; but when he saw it abused, as it was by the Corinthian Church, to an undue exaltation of the instruments, he could speak of it as nothing. “So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth

the increase.” And as to baptism, finding that they had put this out of its proper place, he speaks even depreciatingly of it : “ I thank God that I baptized none of you save Crispus and Gaius : for God sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.” And we do put this rite out of its proper place when we ascribe to it a virtue which it was never made nor meant to possess. There is a latent Popery in the human breast, which is ever prompting us to lay an undue stress on outward ceremonies and forms of worship. This will betray itself occasionally even in the purest Church, and under the simplest administration of the service. It is, in fact, a popular error, and one which it is exceedingly difficult to root out from the human mind.

We may see from the subject further, that on this question, as on others, extremes meet; and that those who plead so high for regeneration as an indispensable qualification for baptism, are in danger of leading others to fall, if they have not fallen themselves, into the delusion, that if baptized they have been regenerated, and if other people have not been baptized in their way of baptism, they have not been regenerated. This is, practically and virtually, baptismal regeneration.

But how lamentable is it to see that, in this enlightened age, the worst errors of Popery should be openly revived in a still professedly Protestant Church ! How pitiable to see the divines and dignitaries of the Church of England clinging to this vulgar delusion of baptismal regeneration, and to witness the desperate shifts to which they are reduced in their attempts to reconcile it with common sense, and the eagerness with which they assert the exclusive privilege of conferring the grace, as if in imitation of the ancient sorcerer, who, confounding

the spiritual gifts of the gospel with his own incantations, cried out, "Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost!" And, to complete the picture, how strange to see them, instead of bringing the utterances of the Church into more accordance with those of Scripture and of the other reformed Churches, zealously engaged in fixing them down on their formularies in the most obnoxious sense, and clinging to all the abuses of the Church with an infatuated fondness, threatening to realize the view of my late venerated father, who used to say, "he could see no other object that could be served by retaining them, unless Providence designed them as a platform for the re-introduction of Popery." *

No wonder that a Church which hugs such a heresy in its bosom, should drive off multitudes to the opposite extreme! No wonder that the dogma of baptismal regeneration should have created so many Baptists! We are not surprised that good men, shocked at the extravagance of a theory, so much out of keeping with the spiritual genius of the gospel, should have fallen into even hyper-spiritualism, and honestly sought refuge from the monster in a denial of baptism to the children of the Church altogether.

Let us, however, look at the matter in the light of Scripture. Let us take this lamp in our hand to examine the sacred symbols of the Christian temple, which have been so much obscured, desecrated, and displaced. Let us remember that in whatever way we may have been baptized, we are the Lord's; and to that blessed Name in which we have been baptized, to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, let us ascribe all honour, blessing, and praise, now and evermore. Amen.

* See Note B—*Baptismal Regeneration*.

LECTURE II.

ON THE MODE OF CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

IN our last lecture, which was intended to be introductory, we gave a general view of the nature and design of Christian Baptism as an ordinance of Christ.

The subject of our present lecture is the proper *mode* of baptism ; whether should it be by sprinkling or pouring water *on* the person ? or by dipping or immersing the person *in* the water ? This is, in our opinion, a very subordinate and immaterial question ; so much so, indeed, that we should have hesitated to introduce it into the pulpit at all, had it not been elevated into such importance by our brethren on the opposite side, who, if we may judge from the zeal with which they have advocated their peculiar mode, seem to regard it as the most important part of the subject. Far be it from us to undervalue the appointed mode of administering any divine ordinance. It is our duty not only to “ observe all things whatsoever he has commanded us,” but exactly *as* he has commanded us ; and Presbyterian Churches have certainly not been behind others in manifesting a desire scrupulously to adhere, in the administration of the sacraments, to the example and command of the Saviour. But the difference in the present instance is not, strictly speaking, as to the mode of administering the ordinance, but rather as to the mode of

administering *the water* used in the ordinance ; it is not a question as to the element to be employed, but rather the *quantity* of that element that should be employed ; it is not a question as to the nature of the sign, for all are agreed that the sign is the application of water ; the question simply is, How that water should be applied—by affusion or by immersion ? Now, is this really a point on which Christians should quarrel or be divided ? Is there not some danger of leading away the mind from the spiritual design of the institution, by attaching so much weight, not to the ceremonial, but to the mere mode of conducting the ceremonial ?

A few remarks may be premised as necessary to be attended to before entering on the controversy in regard to this point.

1. *The baptismal action is the sign of an ablution or washing.*—Whatever other metaphor may be applied to the ordinance itself, the mode of the ordinance, as baptism with water, is plainly a sign of washing. The *baptismal grace*, or blessing represented in baptism, may be spoken of under a variety of figures—as an *ingrafting*—as a *burial*—as a *crucifixion*—as a *clothing*—as a *regeneration* or *new birth*. But the *baptismal sign*—in whatever mode it is exhibited, by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion—is a washing. The sign points primarily and properly, as a sign, to the purification of the soul from the guilt and pollution of sin. This appears from all those passages in which reference is made to the outward symbol. “Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” “Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with *the washing of water* by the word.” Provided this idea, which is cer-

tainly the proper, and not a metaphorical, meaning of the symbol, is preserved, it matters comparatively little, in our estimation, by what particular mode the idea is brought out. In point of fact there are but *two modes* in question, viz. affusion of water upon the person, and immersion of the person in water. Our opponents seem fond of applying the term *sprinkling* to our practice ; but though, in general, a few drops of water may be actually used, in reality the action thereby intended is that of affusion or pouring of water on the person.

2. *The mode, in whatever way it is practised, is symbolical of a complete ablution of the whole person.*—It denotes, not the washing of a part of the sinner only, but a whole sanctification, in soul, spirit, and body. “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.” The symbol therefore, however it may be dispensed, whether by immersion, or pouring, or sprinkling, must be understood to denote the entire purification of the soul from sin.

3. It follows that, *though administered by sprinkling or pouring, this action is meant to serve in the place of a literal washing of the person.*—We do not condemn the practice of immersion as being any thing wrong in itself. As a mode of ablution, it may or may not be practised. All we say is, that it is unnecessary and unessential to the nature or design of the ordinance. Sprinkling, or pouring water on a part of the body, we hold to be enough ; but we hold it so as serving sufficiently to indicate a complete ablution of the person. To illustrate our meaning, we may refer to a passage of our Lord’s history, in the 13th chapter of the Gospel by John. Jesus began to wash the disciples’ feet ; Peter refusing to submit to this act of condescension, he replied, “If I *wash thee* not, thou hast no part with me.” Upon which Peter

replied, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." Jesus saith to him, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." Here it is plain that the spiritual washing to which Jesus referred as essentially necessary, was a complete and thorough washing, so that the person should be "clean every whit." And yet the outward sign of that thorough washing, which was adopted by our Lord on this occasion, was merely the washing of the feet. This served in the place of an entire ablution of the person from head to foot, and was deemed sufficient to mark that perfect washing without which we can have no part with Christ. It is of importance to remember this in all our arguings on the mode of baptism. We may be wrong in making a few drops of water stand for a literal or a complete ablution of the person; but this is, at least, what we mean by the action.

Having made these remarks, we proceed next to consider the grounds on which the mode of baptism by immersion has been supported. This practice, then, has been advocated from the original meaning of the word *baptize*—from the example of Christ and his apostles—from the meaning or design of the ordinance itself—and from the testimony of antiquity.

I. Baptism by literal immersion has been made to rest on the original meaning of the Greek word, which we render "baptize." The amount of controversy that has been waged about this unhappy word is almost incredible. Long treatises and numerous volumes have been written on both sides of the question; and the most learned men have differed in their opinions of its meaning: some maintaining that it means only to *immerse*, others, that it means to *wash* in any way. Evidence has

been led on both sides with an equal display of critical erudition and acumen, and both parties have loudly claimed the victory. The dispute has even extended to the Pædo-baptists, some of whom have agreed with the Baptists in their interpretation, though of course placing no weight on the circumstance. Into this critical disputation it would be out of place to enter here. It does appear at the outset very strange, and an entire anomaly in the history of controversy, that any part of our faith or practice should rest on a single term in Scripture, and that one of doubtful and disputable meaning. It is well for us, however, that there is no need to plunge into this ocean of controversy. It is well for the Christian people that it admits of being solved without their being obliged to answer in the affirmative to the question, "Canst thou speak Greek?" or being compelled to pin their faith to the sleeve of any learned doctor. We do not need to go in search of the meaning of the Christian term, by wading through the pages or even consulting the indexes of heathen writers: it may be found, with the aid of common sense and candour, in the study of our English Bibles.

(1.) Let us then notice, in the first place, that even granting that the original word signifies to *immerse*, the mode which we practise is not really incompatible with this meaning, *in so far as immersion implies a thorough washing*. By pouring a little water on the person, we exhibit the sign of a complete purification; just as by taking a little bread and wine in the other sacrament, we exhibit the sign of a complete meal.

(2.) I am not prepared to grant that *immersion* is the primary meaning of the word translated baptize. The opposite opinion has been held by so many learned men,

and so many examples have been adduced in proof of it, that in my view the scale preponderates in favour of the supposition, that to baptize signified primarily to *wash* or *wet*, and because things are usually washed or wetted by dipping, it came to bear this as its secondary signification.

(3.) But even granting that *dipping* or *immersion* was the primary meaning of the term, we maintain that it came, especially as used by the writers of the New Testament, to signify washing in general, without any reference to dipping or any particular *mode* of cleansing. A vast display of erudition has been given, particularly by the late Dr Carson of Ireland, with the view of proving from Heathen writers, that the Greek word *baptize*, “signifies to dip, and nothing else but dip.” After paying the closest attention to all he has written on this point, I am persuaded that the whole of his reasonings are founded on two fallacious assumptions. The first assumption is, that the writers of the New Testament uniformly employ Greek terms in the same acceptation with Heathen writers. This, however, could be shown, from many instances, to be far from being the case. The peculiar character of the gospel, as a supernatural system, as well as the well-known fact of the sacred writers being Jews, and writing according to the Hebrew idiom, impart a peculiarity to their style which, as is known to every scholar, distinguishes it in a vast variety of respects from classical Greek. Such words as *justification*, *humility*, *grace*, *peace*, *spirit*, *flesh*, *atonement*, and many others, pointing to things unknown to the sages of Greece and Rome, must be understood not in a Homeric or Platonic, but in a New Testament sense. The second fallacious assumption is, that the

Greek word *baptize*, is exactly synonymous with our English word *dip* or *immerse*, in its being incapable of any secondary meaning which has not a reference to the mode. The English terms, you are aware, refer to a particular mode. They may come to bear a number of secondary or figurative meanings, as we may speak of dipping into a volume, or being immersed in business ; but it still retains its primary meaning. To dip can only mean to dip, and to be immersed in any thing still refers to immersion. Now, it has been supposed that the Greek word is exactly of the same import, and the whole of Dr Carson's argument proceeds on this assumption. But here lies the fallacy ; the word *baptize* is not synonymous in this respect with our word *dip*. We never use the English word dip or immerse except in a modal sense ; it has never come in our language to have, for example, the secondary sense of *washing*. If we were to speak of any thing being *dipped* or *immersed*, it would never be understood that we spoke of its being washed or cleansed ; on the contrary, as it might be dipped in ink, or immersed in the mire, no such conclusion could be drawn from the simple use of the terms. But we are prepared to show that the word *baptize* was used by the apostles to signify to *wash or cleanse* ; and that in the simple use of the term, without mention of any element, and without reference to any mode of cleansing.

Turn, then, with me to Luke xi. 38 : “ And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first *washed* [literally, *baptized*] before dinner.” Compare this with Mark vii. 2 : “ And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen hands, they found fault. For the

Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders." Compare this again with 2 Kings iii. 11 : " Here is Elisha, the son of Shaphat, who poured water on the hands of Elijah." From these passages it appears that the Pharisees found fault with Jesus because he had not baptized before dinner ; that this baptism consisted in simply washing the hands ; and that the usual process of washing the hands was by having water poured upon them. Taking all this in connection with the " six water-pots of stone, set after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins [a few gallons] a piece," which our Lord converted into wine at Cana of Galilee, common sense would say that the baptism before dinner was not an immersion of the whole body, or even of any part of the body. But to avoid all cavillation about this, let us simply observe, that in Luke it is said, that " the Pharisee marvelled that he had not first *baptized* before dinner." In whatever way the purifying might be accomplished, it is certain that the word *baptize* is used here to signify purifying. When Luke meant to say that he had not washed himself, he said he had not baptized. And all we mean to draw from the passage is, that the word *baptism*, when used by itself, without any mention of water or any thing else, had come to be employed by the sacred writers as synonymous with washing. This is undeniable ; and we merely say now, that our word *dip* never is, and never was, used as synonymous with washing. It is therefore absurd to allege that it should always be so rendered in our translation. If our translators had rendered it thus, " The Pharisee marvelled that he had not first *dipped* before dinner," what sense

could we have made of it? Dipped in what? But the Jews and Greeks, to whom Luke wrote, well understood the phrase, because it had come to be used by them as another word for cleansing and purification.

The next passage to which we refer you is, Mark vii. 4: "And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing [literally, the *baptism*] of cups and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables," [or beds.] Here we find the word baptism applied to utensils which we cannot suppose for a moment were dipped or immersed in water. They might contrive to immerse their cups and pots; but can it be imagined that they would immerse their "tables," or, as the word properly signifies, their couches and beds? Dr Carson can only answer this by declaring, that he will rather believe that they immersed their beds, couches, and tables in water, than yield that baptism signifies any thing but immersion! And, instead of seeking another meaning for the word, he would father the absurdity on the Spirit by whom the Scriptures were inspired. Few, however, but those who are wedded to a system beyond all hope of conviction, would adopt a mode of interpretation so obviously at variance with the rules of common sense. It is plain they could only baptize their tables and beds by pouring or sprinkling water on them.*

Here, however, let me guard you against a mistaken view of our opinion. *We do not hold that the word baptize signifies to pour or to sprinkle.* Our opponents have invariably represented us as holding this, and nothing is more common than to hear them asking if we would translate the word baptize by pouring or sprinkling. This was never our opinion. The word, we say,

* See Note C—*Dr Carson and the word Baptize.*

signifies *to wash* or *to cleanse*,—an action which may be indicated by pouring or sprinkling; but we never represented either of these modes as the meaning of the term. On the contrary, we maintain that it signifies *cleansing*, without reference either to sprinkling or dipping, or any mode of cleansing whatever. But,

(4.) We add that the term *baptize*, as used in the New Testament, has very frequently a *ritual* meaning—in other words, that it came to signify the Christian ordinance, without any reference to the mode of its administration. In this sense, unquestionably, it is used by Paul: “Unto what baptism were ye baptized? and they said, Unto John’s baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance,” &c.—(Acts xix. 3.) Nothing can be plainer than that the term had come to be appropriated by Christians to designate that ordinance by which persons were initiated into the faith of Christ. They had as good a right as any other community to make a word for themselves, as Beza has said; and, since the term has become consecrated by general use, why seek to change it? Our friends on the opposite side loudly complain that the word has not been translated in our version, but merely transferred from the Greek. But having become descriptive of the peculiar rite of Christianity, there seems to be the greatest propriety in retaining it. Besides, had our translators uniformly rendered it by the terms *immerse* or *dip*, what strange work would have been made of many passages in which it is plainly used in its ritual acceptation! How, for example, would our text have read had it been rendered, “Go, teach all nations, *immersing* or *dipping* them in the name of the Father?” &c. Dipping all nations! and dipping them in a

name! And what sense could be made of such expressions as, being “dipped with the Holy Ghost and with fire?” “immersed into one body,” or “into one Spirit?” “Unto what then were ye *dipped*?” and they said, Unto John’s *dipping*. Then said Paul, John verily *dipped* with the *dipping* of repentance?” &c. And why do not those who are so anxious for this change in our authorized version set the example by changing their own name? Why call themselves Baptists, and not Dippers or Immersionists? Why, just because they feel towards the name they have assumed as we do toward the word in our version, that it serves the purpose of distinction, and that it would be ridiculous to alter it.

II. Having thus seen that no argument can be drawn from the word to *baptize*, in favour of the mode adopted by our opponents, we proceed to notice the examples of baptism recorded in the New Testament.

Here a favourite passage is that in which we are told that “John was baptizing in Enon, near to Salim, for there was much water there.”—(John iii. 23.) It is hardly necessary, however, to dwell on this, as it is a mere inference or presumption, derived from the supposed connection between “baptizing” and “much water.” There is no evidence to show that he preferred that place as more suited for baptizing, because of the abundance of water. Literally, the words read, “Because there were many waters there”—*i. e.*, many springs, wells, or rivulets; and the reason for choosing such a place for carrying on his work, will be apparent when we consider that John preached in the wilderness—that great multitudes resorted thither to him, and that in these sultry climates it is impossible for any, and especially for multitudes, to subsist without an abun-

dant supply of water.—(See Exod. xv. 22, 27.) When it is said that “John was baptizing in Enon,” &c., the meaning is, that he was there preaching the baptism of repentance; and, in order to supply the wants of the immense numbers who resorted to him, he selected a place which abounded with waters. In these dry and thirsty lands, a single spring of fresh water, a little rivulet gliding through the sand, is held precious and inviolable; and the idea that John plunged his converts into these rare wells or streams, would never occur to any who were not misled by a previous theory, or by confounding the wilderness of Judea with our humid and well-watered country. The supposition becomes still more untenable when we reflect on the numbers who were baptized. We are informed by Matthew (iii. 5), that “there went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.” If this was done by pouring, as appears from some of the most ancient representations of John’s baptism, we can conceive how it might be accomplished; but if every one had to be immersed, as the Baptists do, even granting that only some thousands resorted to him for that purpose, it is evident, by computing the time which this would occupy, that he would have spent months in nothing else than the manual work of baptizing.

Another argument has been drawn from what is said of the baptism of our Lord, that when he was baptized in Jordan “he went up straightway out of the water;” and of the Ethiopian and Philip (Acts viii. 28), that they “went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him;” and then “they came up out of the water.” These are the only passages

which *seem* to favour the notion of immersion, and some even of those who practise our mode, have been so far persuaded by their apparent meaning as they read in our version, as to grant that baptism may have been sometimes performed by immersion. We have already said that the mode of applying the water is to us a matter of indifference, if it is applied in Christ's name ; but we cannot allow that these passages, fairly interpreted, give any countenance to immersion. All that can, at the utmost, be granted, is, that they went down *to* the water, or may have stood *in* the water ; it is a mere gratuitous inference to argue that the person baptized was immersed under the water. But the whole plausibility of the inference depends on the way in which the Greek particles are translated in our version ; and it vanishes away when we consider that they might, and we believe ought, to have been rendered, "Jesus went up straightway *from* the water"—"The eunuch and Philip went down *to* the water, and came up *from* it." The sight of water, so uncommon in the wilderness, suggested to the convert that he might be baptized : "Lo, here is water ! what should hinder me to be baptized ?" The little streamlet served as a font in the desert, and they went down the ravine, at the foot of which it was seen flowing, to avail themselves of the rare and much-prized element. If going down and coming up from the water, signify any thing more than their approach to and departure from the place where the water was—if it should be supposed to refer to *going down into*, and *rising up out of the water*—it is evident that this would confound the baptized with the baptizer ; for it is expressly said that "they went down *both* into the water, *both Philip and the eunuch.*"

Philip must, therefore, have gone down bodily into the water and been baptized, as well as the eunuch !

These are the only two passages from which, or rather from the particles *down into*, and *up out of* (which our translators have unwarily, and we think unwarrantably, adopted), it has been inferred, with any degree of plausibility, that John and the apostles practised immersion. To these, however, we have to place in opposition a multitude of other passages, from which the very opposite conclusion must be drawn. Such is the baptism of three thousand persons in one day by Peter and the apostles, on the day of Pentecost. It has been computed that had Peter continued baptizing for six hours without intermission, according to the system of immersion, he would have administered the rite to about ninety persons. How, even with the assistance of all the apostles, the three thousand could have been immersed in one day, is a problem which none has ever attempted to solve ; and how this could be done in the midst of Jerusalem, without any suitable preparation, and in the presence of a promiscuous multitude, including men and women, is utterly beyond the power of imagination to conceive. A difficulty of another kind, but almost equally insurmountable, is connected with the baptism of the jailer of Philippi, and of others in private houses, where such a large supply of water as to serve for the immersion of a number of persons could not be easily obtained ; and the inference which we draw (and on both sides the reasoning is but inferential) seems much more accordant with common sense, as well as the customs of the Jews, that the baptism was effected by simply pouring water on the head of the convert.

III. But we hasten to notice the arguments which

our opponents draw from what is said of the nature and design of the ordinance.

And here we are met by the strangest misconception which, perhaps, has ever entered the minds of good men, in reference to an institution of Christ. The apostle Paul, in the 6th of the Romans, when urging the privileges of Christians as regenerated persons, happens to employ a figure not uncommon to him—that we who are united to Christ have died with him, been buried with him, and raised with him to newness of life. With this he naturally enough connects our baptism, which is the symbol of our regeneration. “Know ye not that as many of you as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” It must be very plain to all unprejudiced minds, that the apostle here speaks of the *spiritual* meaning and effect of baptism, viz. regeneration. He does not include all who may have received the outward rite of baptism; he speaks only of those who had been *baptized into Christ Jesus*—i. e., real converts implanted in Christ; and the meaning is still more evident if the words are read, as they should be, in the *present time*, “Know ye not that as many of us as *are* baptized into Jesus Christ, *are* baptized into his death?” And what is it to be “baptized into the death” or “likeness of the death of Christ?” Surely nothing less than being assimilated or conformed to Christ in his death and resurrection—in other words, dying unto sin, and living unto righteousness. This is the conformity to Christ of which the apostle speaks; and how does baptism bring us into this

conformity? Surely not *as a mere outward symbol*; for if this were true, then *all* who were baptized externally must have been conformed to Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection. But the apostle says this is only true of those who have been *baptized into Christ*—*i. e.*, savingly united unto him; and this saving baptism may have taken place either before or long after the outward baptism was administered. Baptism must, therefore, be here identified, not with the mere outward rite, but the spiritual import of the ordinance, and the blessed effect of it in regeneration and union to Christ, by virtue of which we partake in the benefits of his death, burial, and resurrection.

But what is the use made of this noble passage, I do not say by the Baptists only, but even by some Pædobaptist writers of no mean authority? Imagining that Paul refers here to the outward ceremony of baptism by immersion, they suppose that he represents the *act of immersion* as a *burial*, and the act of getting out of the water as a resurrection; and that *this* is the conformity to Jesus Christ to which the apostle refers! This interpretation was first sanctioned by Chrysostom, a Greek father, more distinguished for eloquence and fancy than sound judgment, and from him hastily borrowed by Luther and others.

But let us not be swayed by the authority of men. What saith the Scripture? There might have been some small feasibility in this interpretation had Paul simply said, “As many of us *as were baptized*, were baptized into Christ’s death.” But the plain statement of the apostle, limiting the image only to those who were *baptized into Jesus Christ*, renders such an interpretation quite inadmissible. What Paul really says is, that truly regenerated men are con-

formed to the Lord Jesus in his death, burial, and resurrection, being viewed as one in him, and partaking of all his benefits. What these critics would make Paul to say is, that every man who has been immersed, by being plunged into the water, and rising again out of it, has had an outward symbol administered to him, of being dead, buried, and raised again, as Christ was. We need not say how far this goes to carnalize and degrade the sentiment of the apostle, and how little it has to do with the argument which he is prosecuting. No, my friends; what he wishes to inculcate, and what he would have you all to ascertain, is, not whether you have been outwardly baptized, either by water poured on you, or by being dipped in water, but whether you have been "baptized into Jesus Christ." If so, then he will tell you that you have died with him, been buried with him, and risen again to newness of life. "For, if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death" (not in outward or symbolical likeness, but in real conformity to his death), "we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."*

I do not delight to expose the views of any conscientious class of Christians to ridicule; and therefore I shall not dwell on the incongruous character which is thus ascribed to baptism. We have already proved that this ordinance was intended to be symbolical of a washing; but nothing in nature can be more incompatible than the notion of a washing and a burial. The same symbol could never be intended to signify both. Besides, the

* Since writing the above, I am happy to find that the view of the passage which it suggests is advocated with great success by President Beecher in his late work, "Baptism: with Reference to its Import and Modes." New York, 1849. In this work Dr Beecher replies to Dr Carson's attack on his former treatise.

notion is founded on an entire misconception of the mode of sepulture practised among the Jews. We bury our dead under the earth, and this, by a stretch of the fancy, may be conceived as something like putting a person under water; but the Jews had no such custom to suggest the image, for their dead were laid in caves scooped out in a rock or rising ground, and secured by a stone laid against the door of the sepulchre. It was thus that our Saviour, at least, was buried. "They laid him in a sepulchre hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre." So that in Paul's mind there could be no such association of ideas, nothing to suggest the comparison between the immersion of a person under water and a burial.

There is only another consideration which I would submit to those who plead so hard for a symbolical burial in baptism from this text. The apostle in another place, using almost the same terms, changes the metaphor, and says, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, *have put on Christ*."—(Gal. iii. 27.) Have we not just as good ground for maintaining, from this passage, that there must be something in the form of baptism resembling the putting on of a garment? And do we not see that here also we must understand him as speaking not of the mode, but of the spiritual design and import of the ordinance? The apostle, in truth, was in love with the symbol of Christianity, as men may be in love with the insignia of royalty, for the sake of the prince with whom they are associated. Baptism became a favourite metaphor with him on all occasions; he would speak of the Jews being "baptized unto Moses," and of Christians being "baptized into Christ," when he merely meant to express union. And

being united to Christ, he may say we are ingrafted into him, we are buried with him, we are crucified with him, we are invested with him. But to say that one of these figures alone, or that any of them, is descriptive of the *mode* of baptism, is mere assumption.

IV. The testimony of antiquity has been frequently appealed to in support of the practice of literal immersion. This testimony, however, is too vague and conflicting to be relied upon with any degree of assurance. That baptism was occasionally performed by the ablution of the whole person in the first ages of the Church, is what none deny. The only question is, Was this the only mode in which it was administered? or was the immersion of the whole body considered essential to baptism? The reverse of this has been clearly proved. It is granted that, according to Oriental usages and the habits of warmer regions, where bathing the whole body was the usual mode of washing, nothing could be more natural than the use of immersion, on convenient occasions, as a mode of religious purifying. It is granted, too, that the Greek Church continued to practise this mode, and to charge the Latin Church as *unbaptized*, because they were not covered with the water from head to foot. But (1.) It has been shown that this practice was *never argued from the original meaning of the word baptize*. The Greeks never thought of proving their point against the Latins by pleading that the Greek term signified only to *immerse*. On the contrary, this term is used in their own writings, in innumerable instances, in the simple sense of purifying. They pleaded for their practice on quite different grounds; the water had, according to them, been sanctified as a means of regeneration by Christ's presence in it; the spiritual puri-

fication was imparted through the medium of the external; and if a single portion of the body remained untouched by "the purifying flood," the virtue of the baptism was lost! This is of a piece with the other superstitions of the Greek Church. And the connection between this superstitious view of the sacrament with the early habit of ascribing peculiar virtue to external forms, is too plainly exhibited in the history of the Church.* (2.) It has been shown that this idea derived plausibility from the strange turn given by Chrysostom to Rom. vi. 3, as if the apostle compared baptism in its mode to a burial. (3.) It has been shown that sprinkling and immersion were used in ancient times indifferently, the one being viewed as serving for the other. In the absence of water, even a handful of sand poured on the head of the person, was held a sufficient baptism. In one of the most ancient formularies handed down to us, it is prescribed, that "the water shall be brought, and the minister having blessed the font, shall strip the person to the waist, and pour water on his head."† And in one of the most ancient representations of the baptism of Christ by John,

* It is unnecessary to speak of the *trine* immersions of the Greek Church, or dipping thrice in name of the Trinity, which was held to be as essential as the dipping. "Let the holy water, the baptismal chrism, to symbolize and bestow the Holy Spirit—the putting on of white robes after baptism, to symbolize the putting on of Christ—the baptism of men and women perfectly naked, to denote their entire moral nakedness before putting on of Christ—let the anointing of the eyes and ears, to denote the sanctification of the senses—let the eating of honey and milk—the sign of the Cross; and, finally, let baptismal regeneration, the sum and completion of all these tendencies—bear witness to the mournful truth."—(Baptism: with reference to its Import and Modes. By Edward Beecher, D.D., p. 60.)

† Hoornbeek, *De Baptismo Veterum*, Miscel. Sacr., pp. 512-514. Cloppenburg, *Op. Theol.*, p. 1084. Voet. Pol. Eccl., i. 683, &c.

the Saviour is seen standing a short way in the water, while the Baptist is pouring the water on his head from a vessel. In short, all accounts agree that, in whatever mode the ceremony was performed, whether by sprinkling or affusion of water on the person, whether by dipping the head in the water or pouring water upon the head, it was never performed by laying a full-grown person at full length in the water—a practice which no antiquity sanctions, and which may be regarded as a mere accommodation to the modern fashion of bathing a child.

V. In concluding this part of the subject, I beg to mention, very briefly, a few reasons for preferring our mode of administering the ordinance of baptism to that which we have been combating.

1. It seems more consonant to the main figurative *design* of the ordinance, which is to represent a washing or purification. Immersion is not of itself significative of washing. And, after all, the dipping of a person once in water, is not a washing; it is a mere symbol of washing. So far as literal washing is concerned, it is nothing better than pouring or sprinkling. By adhering to our mode, we keep up all that is intended by the rite—the idea of purification, unperplexed by the incongruous metaphor of a burial, which entirely overshadows and shuts out the idea of the washing of regeneration.

2. It is, as we have already hinted, quite in harmony with the *simplicity and spirituality* of the gospel. All must have observed how little the institutions of Christ, when purely administered, are indebted to the mere artistic show or formality of their administration. In the Lord's Supper, how simple is the ceremony! It is not a meal, but the mere semblance of a meal; and

though a full feast—"a feast of fat things full of marrow, a feast of wines on the lees"—is the thing intended by the action, yet the smallest bit of bread and the least sip of wine is held sufficient to constitute the rite. So baptism, in our view, is not a literal washing of the person, but the mere semblance of a washing; and, to use the language of Witsius, the most profound as well as the most pacific of divines, "a little drop of water may serve to seal the fulness of divine grace in baptism, as well as a small piece of bread and the least tasting of wine in the holy supper."*

In all symbolical actions, as well as in holy sacraments, the same principle is observed. Infestments, according to our law, are accompanied by putting a small quantity of stone and earth into the hands of the purchaser, in token of the whole property being transferred to him. Under the Levitical law, the washing of the whole body was represented by divers baptisms or sprinklings—in circumcision, a part of the flesh was cut off in sign of the whole—and the first-fruits were accepted for the whole harvest. And may we not expect, in the absence of all certain proof to the contrary, that under the Christian dispensation, so spiritual and heavenly, of which it is said by our Lord, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing," still less regard would be paid to the mere quantity of water employed, to the mere bodily service, to the mere manipulation and covering of the person with the fluid? Will Christ, think you, not accept of the little drop of water as sufficient, as well as the little drop of wine? "What!" says Paul to those who would make a full

* Witsius, *Œconom. Fœd.*, lib. iv. cap. 16. 30.

meal of the Supper, "What! have ye not houses to eat and to drink in?" And what! we may say, in all kindness to our brethren—have ye not houses to wash and to bathe in? Why, then, convert the church of God into a public bath, any more than into a public eating-house?

3. The practice we adopt might be shown to be *more adapted for universal use*. Though bathing the whole person might be a common mode of washing in the East, it is not so among us. It is no more binding upon us than lying at full length as they did when partaking of the Lord's Supper. To submit to such a process of ablution in our climate would, in some cases, be dangerous to bodily health, if not fatal to human life. In still more northern regions, it would be next to impracticable. And I shall only say further, without the smallest desire to give offence, that whatever may have been the case in the East, where, I think, such a thing would not have been tolerated—in our country, where such a thing never occurs in ordinary life, a public exhibition of bathing men and women, before a promiscuous assembly, however conducted, is not considered consistent with decency; and I cannot conceive that our blessed Lord would enjoin any rite calculated to bring the conscience into collision with the most sensitive feelings of delicacy and propriety.

4. In the last place, our mode is an exact representation of the mode in which the influences of the Spirit are said to descend, and the blood of Christ is said to be applied to the soul. Christ said to his disciples, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." How was this promise fulfilled? how were they baptized? Was it by immersion? No: the Holy Ghost

appeared to them in cloven tongues, as if of fire, and sat upon them. And Peter said, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel, It shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will *pour out* my Spirit upon all flesh." And again, "I will *pour* my Spirit on your seed, and my blessing on your offspring. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean." In short, the mode of pouring water on the person intimates that the blessing of the Spirit is *received* by us; and therefore, in order to be rightly dispensed, *the water should be applied to the person, and not the person applied to the water.* "Indeed," says John, "baptize *with* water [not immerse you *in* water], but he shall baptize you *with* the Holy Ghost and *with* fire"—not plunge you *in* the Holy Ghost, or *in* fire! We doubt very much if baptism *in* water brings out the true idea of the ordinance. Even though immersion should take place, the very nature of the ordinance seems to require that, in addition to this, to symbolize the pouring out of the Spirit on the person, the water should in some form be applied to him by the minister, in the name of the Holy Trinity.

The same image is frequently employed in reference to the blood of Christ applied to the soul for pardon and purification. The whole idea is beautifully brought out in that passage, with which we shall conclude: "He hath saved us by the *washing* of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he *shed* on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour."

LECTURE III.

ON THE SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM.

WE now come to consider the proper *objects* of Christian baptism, or to whom it ought to be administered.

This is certainly the most important part of the controversy, and far more worthy of consideration than the mere outward mode of administering the ordinance. Yet, as we hinted at the close of last lecture, there is evidently some connection between the ideas which our opponents attach to the *mode*, and their opinion as to the proper *subjects* of baptism. This appears from the stress they lay on the term *baptize*, and from their constantly recurring to the mode when speaking of the ordinance. They cannot treat of infant baptism without having a taunt at our mode, and styling it “infant sprinkling;” they cannot argue the necessity of what they call “believer’s baptism,” without ever and anon dragging in the idea of *immersion*. It seems as if, in their conception, the two things must stand or fall together; and that, if sprinkling can be proved to be a right mode of baptizing, they are ready to grant that infants may be baptized as well as adults.

It might have been interesting, had time permitted, to trace this connection. We shall only remark, that one reason may be, because the mode of immersion, as they practise it, seems necessarily to imply some active exer-

tion on the part of the person baptized—the going down and coming up out of the water (as it is wrongly translated in our version), appearing to be something more than an infant can do; whereas water may be poured upon an infant as well as an adult. But the chief reason, we conceive, is because they attach more importance than we do to the mere manual operation while in the act of performance; whereas we consider that the efficacy of baptism, and its advantages, depend mainly, though not entirely, on the subsequent improvement which is made of the act once performed. But this will come to be more carefully considered at another stage of the argument.

In connection with this, I may be allowed to advert to another favourite phrase of our opponents, on which they seem to place great reliance, as fitted to excite prejudice against our practice; and this is the perpetual use of the word *infant*. They delight in reiterating such phrases as “infant sprinkling”—“the baptism of unconscious babes.” Indeed, most of their arguments are drawn from the apparent incongruity of a Christian ordinance being dispensed to a mere helpless and speechless infant. Now, though those whom we baptize may be in a state of infancy, we deny that it is *as infants* that we baptize them. It is as *children*—the sons and daughters of believing Christians. The fact of their being *infants*, does not indeed, in our view, disqualify them for receiving baptism; but neither is it as infants that they are entitled to the ordinance. We found, not on their age, but on the relation in which they stand to their parents; or rather their relation to the covenant of which they are the children. Our practice therefore might, with more propriety, be termed *child baptism*, or

family baptism, than *infant baptism*. It is true that it has become a common practice among us to administer the ordinance at the earliest age at which the child can be presented to the Church. But no time, no certain age, has been prescribed for the administration; and the end of the ordinance would be equally well gained if it were delayed to a somewhat later period in life, when the child was so far advanced as to "have knowledge to cry, My father and my mother"—unable indeed to appreciate the spiritual import of the sacrament, but still able to know, and perhaps to remember, what was done to him. In this case, it would still be child baptism; parents would still present their children to the Lord, and the child would be received on the same principles as we now receive the infant. But our Baptist friends would, in such a case, be deprived of what serves them as a very strong argument, and a popular objection; they could no longer speak of "infant sprinkling," or "the baptism of unconscious babes!" We take leave, however, at this early stage of the discussion to state, that it is not at all essential to our argument that they should be infants. We will not reject them because they are such; but we receive them not *as such*, but as the children of Christian parentage.

To whom, then, is baptism to be administered? We answer, To all whom the Church is bound to recognize as her members. It is in itself, viewed apart from the promised blessing, a sign of membership—the badge of the Christian order—stamped on all whom the Church is enjoined to receive as belonging to Christ. Heathens and Jews, infidels and idolaters, having no relationship to the Church, cannot be recognized by her until they have professed Christianity; in virtue of which profes-

sion they become, according to the judgment of Scripture, members of the Church, and entitled to its privileges. And he who has "denied the faith, and become worse than an infidel," can only be re-admitted to these privileges on his repentance. But we maintain, that IN THE ADMISSION OF PROFESSING CHRISTIANS INTO THE CHURCH, AND INTO THE BOND OF HIS HOLY COVENANT, THEIR CHILDREN SHOULD BE ADMITTED ALONG WITH THEM; AND THAT SO LONG AS THE PARENT CONTINUES TO ENJOY HIS CHURCH PRIVILEGES, HIS CHILDREN SHOULD SHARE IN THEM WITH HIMSELF.

This being the grand point in debate, we begin by laying it down as our fundamental position, which all our subsequent arguments are intended to illustrate and confirm. Provided we can show that it is God's will that the children shall be admitted along with the parents to the privileges of the Church, and within the bond of his covenant, we think it will be impossible to deny that children ought to receive the symbol of admission into the Church, and the seal of God's holy covenant in baptism. We would beg a candid attention to the arguments which may be brought from Scripture in proof of this position, and would earnestly entreat any who may entertain scruples in regard to their soundness, to suspend their decision for a little, till we have an opportunity of replying to the objections of our opponents.

I. Our fundamental position is agreeable to the uniform principle of the divine administration from the very commencement of the Church. From the beginning of time, God has had a people on the earth, visibly distinguished from the world, who have "called on the name of the Lord." This people, or society, has existed in various forms. In the patriarchal age, it was in the form of

families. It came afterwards to be confined to the family of Abraham for certain important purposes in relation to the promised Messiah ; and when this family had greatly increased, it became commensurate with the nation of Israel, which was, for many ages, the “peculiar people of God.” This society, the visible Church of God, was composed of those who enjoyed his ordinances and his presence, and who made a public profession of his name. But as a thousand quibbles have been raised about the proper application of the word *church*, we shall for the present drop that word, and call them the society or people of God.

Now, it is undeniable, that in all his transactions with this society, whether in the form of command, or of covenant, or of promise, whether in the way of mercy or of judgment, of blessing or of chastisement, God invariably associated the children with the parents. We do not now inquire into the *reason* of this procedure ; and perhaps, my friends, there has been too much said on both sides of the question, both in the way of quarrelling with the arrangement, and of attempting to justify it. It should be enough for us that it hath so pleased our Heavenly Father, though we may not be able to explain the reasonableness of his so doing. Some, I am aware, have attempted to explain it, by arguing that, as children partake in the pollution and condemnation of their parents in virtue of their natural descent, it was equitable that they should be included in the outward privileges of that gospel which came to save us from the effects of the fall. Another reason has been found in the light of nature, which teaches, that as children share in the heritages of their progenitors, both in bodily constitution and worldly goods, it is but reasonable they should par-

ticipate in their spiritual privileges, in as far as these can be transferred to them. But we place no weight on such reasonings. The *fact itself* is beyond all question. In his covenant with Noah, God included his sons as well as himself. In his covenant with Abraham, he included his children as well as himself. If we may be permitted to assign any reason at all for such an arrangement, we should rather say that it proceeded on the principle, that children are the peculiar and exclusive *property* of the parents. The parent can say, in a sense in which no other can say, "This is *my* child." Now, this propriety God was pleased to recognize, and to say, "Not only *you* but all *yours* shall be mine, and more especially your dear children, who may be said to be part of yourselves." This view is confirmed, by finding that the original constitution of the covenant with Abraham included not only his children, but his servants, who were not of his seed; the servants in these early ages being bought with money, were considered the property of their master, as well as his own children, and were treated very much on the same footing.—(See Gen. xvii. 10-13.)

It is needless to show how frequently this social principle is recognized in the Old Testament. "You and your seed," is in fact the ordinary form in which the promises run. It is of more importance to the present question to observe, that the same principle is as clearly developed in the New Testament. Our Lord said of Zaccheus, "This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham."—(Luke xix. 9.) "The promise," said Peter, "is to you and to your children." "Thou," said Paul, "shalt be saved, and thy house." Do we then say that the promise of salvation was given to the whole household, in virtue of the

faith of its head? Certainly not in the same sense. But surely there must be *some sense* in which it holds true; and should we not rather humbly inquire *in what sense* this could be true, than begin to carp and cavil at the fact, as if there could be *no sense* in which salvation had come to the house in virtue of God's promise to the head of it? God does not, indeed, pledge himself to save every member of the family; but if even *one* of that family is eventually saved, the promise would be fulfilled, and fulfilled in virtue of the covenant relation into which the house was brought with God. Jonathan made David swear, "Thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever." Many of Jonathan's children perished, but one was saved, and saved in virtue of this covenant. "David said to Mephibosheth, Fear not, for I will surely show thee kindness, *for Jonathan thy father's sake.*" Far be it from us to overlook the spirituality of the gospel, and the momentous truth that religion is a personal concern, dealing with every man's conscience in the sight of God. It would be treason against Christ and treachery to the souls of men to conceal this truth, or say any thing calculated to turn men's eyes away from it. But, though not equally wicked, it is a proof of great weakness to allow our zeal for this truth to shut our eyes to the fact, equally plain from Scripture, that religion deals with man as a social being. Religion is derived from a word which signifies to bind. Sin is a principle of disunion; religion is a principle of union. The one acts as a dissolvent, scattering society into a thousand fragments; the other acts as a magnet, gathering the fragments together. This social principle is developed in outward forms; and not only in the form of churches, but of families. Christianity, while

it creates supernatural ties, does not abolish natural ones; it recognizes and sanctifies the social relations of life, and more especially the fundamental relation, the domestic. And not only does this hold true of its inward influence in the heart by attaching the members together; there is an outward emblem of this in the privilege of baptism, by means of which the family is declared one in the sight of God. Baptism "setteth the solitary in families;" it groups them in so many blessed circles; and, giving them a common impulse, makes them revolve, like clusters of stars, around the Sun of righteousness.

II. Our fundamental position is illustrated in the Abrahamic covenant. A whole household, including children, were brought into covenant with God, and consecrated to him by the symbol of circumcision. Now, we are aware that a great deal of discussion has been raised about the Abrahamic covenant, and that our opponents stoutly deny that it was the covenant of grace. They hold that it was merely a national covenant, including the fleshly seed of Abraham as such—that it contained nothing more than temporal promises, such as the inheritance of Canaan, and outward prosperity—and that, depending on conditions, it was a defectible covenant, or one which might be broken, and which was actually abolished, and gave place to the true covenant of grace under the gospel. At the same time, finding that the apostle Paul makes much use of this covenant in his reasonings with the Jews, to show that it referred to Christ and to spiritual blessings, they are driven to maintain that there may have been two covenants made with Abraham—one relating to his fleshly, and another to his spiritual, seed; or that the same covenant may have had a double

reference—one a literal reference to the fleshly seed, another typical only, in reference to the spiritual.

Without dragging you through all the windings of this interminable controversy, I shall endeavour, very briefly, to show the place which we assign to this covenant, and the degree of weight we attach to it, in the argument for the baptism of children. And, in the *first* place, granting, for the sake of argument, that the covenant with Abraham was of a mere temporal character, having respect only to temporal blessings, or to temporal as typical of spiritual blessings under the New Testament, we maintain, that even when viewed in this light, it affords us an illustration of the principle of God's administration to which we have referred—the conjunction of children with their parents in a divine covenant. It is of importance to mark this ; for though the blessings may have been temporal and earthly, still they were God's blessings, bestowed by him as a Father, and as such were gracious favours, distinguishing his people from the rest of mankind. The rainbow in the heavens shone with equal lustre on all mankind ; but as given to Noah and his family, it was a sacred sign of God's peculiar favour. The land of Canaan, with all its earthly fruits, was God's land, and, as given to Abraham and his seed, was a token of his grace and mercy to the house of Israel. Here then, in the Abrahamic covenant, we have, beyond all dispute, children interested in a covenant which contained the blessings of God's peculiar love and favour to his people. “ Lord, thou hast been favourable to thy beloved land.” “ Thou hast not dealt so with every nation.”

But, in the *second* place, it is perfectly apparent that the Abrahamic was *not* a mere temporal covenant—

embracing only temporal blessings. The very terms in which it runs show the reverse: "*I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed.*" In what sense, we ask, was Jehovah the God of Abraham? Was it only in a figure? Was it merely in a temporal sense? Let our Lord answer this question: "But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read in the book of Moses, how God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living: ye therefore do greatly err."—(Mark xii. 26.) And what ground have we for saying that he was the God of Abraham in one sense, and the God of his seed in another? Such a mode of trifling with Scripture would be held, in any other case, perfectly inadmissible by our opponents. His promise, "*I will be thy God,*" is substantially the great promise of the gospel. When David said, "*O Lord, thou art my God, early will I praise thee,*" he expressed the sum and substance of every spiritual and heavenly blessing. The tongue of man could ask, the heart of man could wish, no higher joy. It was all that Thomas desired, when he exclaimed, with the Saviour in his arms, "*My Lord and my God.*" It was all that Paul could say in the height of his gratitude, "*I thank my God through Christ Jesus.*" It is all that the redeemed can say amidst the ecstasies of their bliss, "*Salvation to our God that sitteth on the throne!*" We grant at once, that the Abrahamic covenant contains many temporal promises and blessings; but we maintain that this single promise proves that it also contained the very marrow and fulness of the gospel.

But we go further, and maintain that it was in substance and essence the *covenant of grace*. The mere

temporal parts of it must, in the very nature of things, be viewed as subordinate to the spiritual; the typical must bow to what was typified; for we cannot imagine, that either in the eyes of God or of Abraham, the mere promise of a good land, and plenty to eat and drink, would be considered as taking the precedence of the promise, "I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed." But the matter is set at rest by Paul, in Gal. iii. 17: "And this I say, that the covenant (of Abraham) that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect." It is plain from this that the apostle regarded the promise or covenant made with Abraham, as the unchangeable promise or covenant of the gospel; he contrasts it with the law given at Mount Sinai; and he maintains that it could not be disannulled, or even added to. It remained in substance the same. Nay further, he distinctly asserts, that God designed that "the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles, through Jesus Christ," and that "they which are of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham." *The blessing of Abraham*, therefore (which is carefully to be distinguished from the *blessings* of the covenant, some of which were earthly), has descended to those of the Gentiles who believe. Can this be said to be a mere carnal or worldly blessing? Or can the covenant in which the blessing was conveyed be considered a carnal and worldly covenant.

3dly, The argument we establish on this, is very obvious. Here is a covenant, which, in its essential features, was the covenant of grace and of blessing in Christ; and yet the children of Abraham were admitted within the bond of this covenant, and declared to

be so by the sign of circumcision. All that we deduce from this, so far as we have gone, is, that children may be interested in, and admitted into, the bond of the covenant of grace. Our opponents attempt to evade the force of this reasoning, by what we must call mere quibbling about the seed or children interested in the Abrahamic covenant. It was merely the fleshly seed of Abraham as such, they say, that were interested in this transaction; and they were mere types and figures of Christ and his spiritual seed, or believers under the New Testament; and therefore nothing can be drawn from this, except that believers under the New Testament are interested in the covenant of grace. Now we grant that it was the fleshly seed of Abraham, or his children by natural descent (though not they alone, or exclusively), who were interested in the covenant, and that they may be regarded, in one sense, as types and figures of believers under the New Testament. But, then, (1.) Though they were types of believers, it does not follow that they might not have been believers themselves. Isaac was a type; but was Isaac not also a believer, as well as his father? Jacob was a type; was Jacob not also a saint and a believer? The fallacy lies in supposing that there was no true Church of God before the coming of Christ, and that all the saints of the Old Testament were nothing better than the symbols of the temple, mere shadows of saints and believers that were to come. According to this sweeping sentence, the long list of worthies, recorded by Paul in the 11th chapter of the Hebrews, were no better than so many types and shadows—mere nonentities, so far as saving faith and an interest in the covenant of grace was concerned. Unless we are prepared for this wholesale excision of

the ancient saints, we must allow that Abraham's fleshly seed, though in one sense typical, might be in another sense *true* believers. (2.) We must carefully distinguish between the *blessing* of the covenant, and the mere external *sign* of it. The sign, namely circumcision, was administered to all the seed or children of Abraham; but the *blessing* of the covenant, whether viewed as carnal or spiritual, was not thereby secured to them all. All were circumcised; but the spiritual blessing of the covenant would only come on those of the seed who belonged to the election of grace, and who, if spared to mature years, would believe. The temporal blessings of the covenant, being suspended on God's sovereign pleasure, would only descend on those of the seed whom he pleased thus to bless, or who should comply with his conditions. Hence, even the fleshly seed did not enter on the enjoyment of Canaan till 430 years after the covenant, and many that were circumcised fell in the wilderness. Thus it appears, that though the promised blessing of the covenant was sure only to the spiritual seed, the outward sign and seal of the covenant was administered to all the seed, and thus our proposition remains unshaken,—that we have, in the case before us, *the sign and seal of the covenant of grace administered to children.*

4thly, We may proceed to remark that circumcision, the seal of this covenant, was meant to signify *spiritual* as well as temporal blessings. It is expressly said by the apostle to be “a seal of the righteousness which he (Abraham) had, being yet uncircumcised.” And the same appears from the manner in which it is uniformly spoken of, both in the Old and New Testaments. Thus, Jeremiah, speaking of the heathen around him, says, “All these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house

of Israel are uncircumcised in heart.”—(Jer. ix. 26.) “Circumcise the foreskin of your heart,” says Moses, “and be no more stiff-necked.”—(Deut. xix. 16.) And, referring to the purity of the Church in New Testament times, Isaiah saith, “There shall thenceforth no more come unto thee the uncircumcised and the unclean.” In reference to this, Paul says, “He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly: and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.”—(Rom. ii. 28.) From all which it appears that circumcision denoted the spiritual blessing of a new heart and a right spirit. And it was also a *seal* of the covenant, inasmuch as it was fitted to confirm the faith of all God’s people in the truth of the promise, “I will be thy God and the God of thy seed.”

It is of importance to keep in view this simple and primitive meaning of the rite, and not to confound it with that which it afterwards assumed when it became associated with the law of Moses. Circumcision then became a badge of subjection to the Levitical law. It served as part of the middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles, and adherence to it implied a determination to seek for righteousness by the works of the law. Hence the propriety of its abolition under the gospel. But our Lord would have us to look back to its primitive institution. “Moses gave you circumcision, not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers.” And, viewed as “of the fathers,” it is simply the symbol of heart purification—the cutting off and mortification of the sins of the flesh, and a seal of God’s gracious promise. Our Lord would overlook the law, with its legal conditions and its ritual

shadows, and carry us back to the days of the promise, which the law, 430 years after, could not disannul. In like manner Paul, when writing about circumcision to the Romans, speaks of it as a *patriarchal rite*; but when writing about it to the Galatians, he speaks of it as a *Mosaic rite*. Unless this is kept in view, we will involve the question in utter confusion.

5thly, Still further, we are warranted to conclude that, with various points of diversity, baptism and circumcision resemble each other as seals of the covenant, and *baptism has come in the place of circumcision*. When we consider that they are correlate signs—both of them being signs of God's covenant with his people—that they resemble each other so much in the spiritual blessings represented, and that, as one designated the Jew, so the other designated the Christian—the conclusion seems very natural that the one has been substituted for the other, as it is certain the one has superseded the other. Hence we often find the apostles placing the two together, when speaking of Judaism and Christianity. “As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. For there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”—(Gal. iii. 27, 28.) Again, “And ye are complete in him, in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: being buried with him in baptism.”—(Col. ii. 10-12.) Here the apostle shows his Gentile converts that they had no reason to regret the want of circumcision. They had that which circumcision signified—the “putting away of the sins of the flesh;” and, if any should allege

that the ancient Church had this, and the outward seal of it also, in circumcision, he shows that they also had the outward seal in baptism, as a sign of their communion with Christ in the benefits of his death and resurrection. There would be no force in his reasoning, unless baptism had come in the room of circumcision. And in the other passage he points out the advantage of baptism above circumcision. Circumcision was mostly confined to the Jews, but baptism is extended to all nations. Bondmen were not circumcised without the permission of their masters ; but, under the gospel, slaves are freely admitted to baptism. Males only were circumcised, but males and females are equally the subjects of baptism. Does not all this reasoning evince, that in the eye of Paul baptism now supplied the place, and came in the room, of circumcision ? And as children were circumcised under the former dispensation of the gospel, why should they not be baptized now ?

This argument might be prosecuted at great length ; but we close it by adverting to a passage which we think sufficiently shows how the apostles regarded it. It is that famous passage in Acts ii. 38, 39, where Peter, addressing the Jews, says, “ Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ ; for the promise is unto you *and to your children*, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” Let us attend to these words ; not as they may appear *to us* when we read them, but as they must have appeared *to the Jews* when they heard them. And keeping in mind what we have advanced as to the invariable procedure of God towards the Jews, in admitting their children into covenant with themselves, what must have been their impression when informed that the pro-

mise of the gospel was not only to them but to their children? Would they not have regarded this as an invitation to repent and come to be baptized, and bring their children along with them to receive the badge of Christianity? And how much must they have been surprised, disappointed, and even offended, if they had been told, When we spoke of your children we did not intend what you may have been led to suppose from your Old Testament phraseology, your children according to the flesh, but your spiritual children, or those of your children whom in after years the Lord may call—your posterity in short, provided they turn out to be believers? Why, they might reply, this is saying no more than what may be said of them that are afar off! If this was all your meaning, why speak of our children at all? Why inspire us with the false hope that we are permitted to bring our children to baptism, as we did to circumcision, only to baulk us by telling us now that they have no more interest in the covenant than any other? We are “the children of the covenant and of the promise which God gave to our fathers.” We were so as soon as we came into the world, and so are our children. We hesitate to join a religion which abridges our rights, and thrusts out our children as heathens and publicans. But no, says the Apostle; I am a Jew, and, speaking to Jews, I assure you, in the sense which you are familiar with, that “the promise is to you *and to your children.*” *

III. Our fundamental position is further confirmed by the fact, that in Scripture the children of professing parents are recognised as being *members of the visible*

* The objections raised against this argument are taken up in the next Lecture.

*church.** As there is an outer and an inner man, so is there an outer and an inner church—the former being the visible image and embodiment of the other. And as the outer and inner man is the same being, viewed in different aspects, so is it with the church. In correspondence to this, there is an outer and an inner baptism—a baptism in the name of Christ, and a baptism into Christ. The former baptism is an outward privilege, and has only to do with the outer church. As administered by the Church, it establishes merely a visible relationship; it secures outward advantages. It is in this sense only, as constituent parts of the visible community called by Christ's name, that we consider children as entitled to the character of church members. That they enjoyed this character under the Old Testament, has, we think, been already established; and, indeed, is hardly denied by any. “Ye stand

* I am aware that some of my brethren prefer representing baptism as the *admission* of the child to be a member of the Church. But the difference is quite immaterial, and arises solely from attaching a different meaning to the term *admission*. There can be no doubt that baptism is the act by which *the Church* admits the child into her bosom. By refusing baptism to their children, the Baptists refuse to admit them into the Church. By administering that ordinance to our children, we consent to admit them. But all Pædobaptists agree, that in thus admitting them, we are merely recognizing their church-membership; in other words, proceeding on the assumption that children are constituent parts of the Church visible. *In the estimation of God*, and *in the judgment of Scripture*, they are already members of the Church; but it is the duty of the Church, in the ministration of her privileges, to act according to that estimation and judgment; and hence the Church's act may be considered as an admission of the child. But in the text, we prefer speaking of the light in which the child is held in the eye of Scripture, which is as a member of Christ's Church, and therefore entitled to Church privileges.

this day, *all of you*, before the Lord your God," said Moses to the assembled Israelites; "your captains, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel; *your little ones*, your wives, &c., that thou shouldst enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath." Let it not be said, how could "the little ones" enter into the covenant and the oath of God? There they stand, acknowledged by God as in covenant with him, and forming a part of his visible church. In fact, the whole people of Israel were held as "a holy nation"—not all endowed with personal holiness; but holy in the sense of being consecrated to God in covenant. In attestation of this, the first-born were solemnly presented, in the name of the rest, to the Lord, and redeemed by a sacrifice. And it is an interesting fact, that our blessed Lord, as being the first-born of Mary his mother, was brought to Jerusalem after his circumcision, and presented to the Lord, as it is written in the law of the Lord: "Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord." Now the Christian church succeeded to the privileges and status of the ancient church. "Ye," says Peter, addressing Christians, "ye are an holy nation, a peculiar people." With all the external changes, in point of outward administration and of outward privilege, which took place after the coming of Christ, the church of the Old and of the New Testament was essentially the same church, under different economies. Hence the New Testament church is represented by the apostles, not as a new erection, but as the introduction of the Gentiles into the old church. "Remember that in time past ye were Gentiles, in the uncircumcision of your flesh, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers

from the covenants of promise; having no hope, and without God in the world. But now, ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, and are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets." The Jewish church was the good olive-tree, some of the branches of which were broken off (*i. e.*, external branches in the visible church, for the spiritual branches of the church as invisible could never be broken off) in order that we Gentiles might be grafted in, and partake of the root and fatness of the olive-tree. If, therefore, the Gentiles were introduced into the ancient church, they must have been introduced to all its privileges, and this among others, that they and their children were alike regarded as members of the church, and as belonging to the holy nation.

In proof of this we may refer to two passages. The first is in 1 Cor. vii. 14 : "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband ; else were your children unclean ; but now are they holy." The difficulty which Paul sets himself to remove here, arose from the infidelity of one of the parties united in marriage. In what light were their children to be regarded—as unclean, or as holy ? The apostle decides on the latter, in virtue of the faith of the believing party, which might be viewed as sanctifying the unbelieving party. The mere fact of such a question having been raised in the Church, proves that it was well understood that the children of believing parents are, in a certain sense, holy ; and that, in the case of both being Christians, there was no question as to the holiness of the children. No reasonable meaning can be attached to the words unclean and holy here, as applied to children, save that to which we

have referred : they were to be regarded as federally holy, holy in virtue of their covenant relation to God, and belonging to the holy nation. To say that it means they would be *legitimate* is absurd, as it would imply that the children would have been unclean or illegitimate unless one or other of the parents were Christians ; as if the ordinance of marriage was not as valid among heathens as Christians ! And equally futile is the attempt to get rid of the argument by saying, that according to our view the unbelieving husband would be holy too ; for the apostle asserts holiness only of the children ; the unbelieving husband is only *sanctified* to the believing wife, which any candid interpreter will at once admit, simply means that what was wanting in the federal holiness of the one party, would be graciously compensated by that of the other. And on this ground we baptize the child to the believing mother, for example, though the father is an unbeliever.

The other passage is Mark x. 13 : “ And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them ; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not : for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.” The force of this passage, which was that generally referred to by the fathers in the early ages of the Church in favour of the baptism of children, may be estimated from the intense eagerness shown by our opponents to wrest it out of our hands. Some of them, in their extreme zeal, would deny that these were infants at all ; but the fact that Luke calls them “ infants,” and that Jesus took them up in his arms, has driven them

from this to say next, he only "blessed" them, we are not told that he baptized them. To this the reply is, that Jesus baptized not, but his disciples; and that we quote the passage merely to prove that children, ay even infants, form part of the church of God—"For of such is the kingdom of God." Whether this refers to the church on earth or in heaven, it pleads, trumpet-tongued, in behalf of the children. They belong to my Church, says the Saviour; therefore forbid them not to come to me on earth, that they may be recognised as such. If they are members of my Church in heaven, why exclude them from my Church on earth? Driven to desperation by this recognition of children in a character which they are determined to deny them, our opponents have fixed at last on the word *such*. It is only *such*—*i. e.*, say they, *suchlike*—persons who have the dispositions of children that are of the kingdom of God. Those who are satisfied with such an argument must not be very difficult to please. When Paul says of Epaphroditus, "Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold *such* in estimation," does he mean only *suchlike* persons? When he said, "*Such* an high priest became us, who is holy," did he mean only something *suchlike*? When he said, "I beseech you, being *such* an one as Paul the aged," did he mean to say, he was some one very like Paul the aged in point of temper and dispositions? It is true our Lord commends the dispositions of little children; and so he does the dispositions of serpents and doves, but did he take *them* up in his arms and bless them? The word *such* is evidently employed in a *distinctive* sense. It intimates, not that *these* children, or that *all* children were members of Christ's Church or heirs of heaven, but that *children as such* were or might to be so. It is as if he

had said, "Children, as well as men, are members of my church." The whole passage smiles approvingly on the practice of bringing children to Christ in baptism. Being members of his church, or of the kingdom of heaven, they are entitled to be formally and solemnly *declared* such by baptism, the initiatory sign of discipleship. If any should forbid water that they be baptized, Christ says, Forbid them not; and he is displeased with the officious zeal of those who would place themselves between him and these little ones. If they should say, Of what use is baptizing to them? we may reply, Of what use was Christ's laying his hands on them and blessing them? And where the great Head of the church did not disdain to receive little children into his arms and blessing, it would ill become any of his servants to refuse to follow his example.

IV. The next direct argument in confirmation of our position for the baptism of children with their parents, is founded on the commission of Christ in the words before us: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."—(Matt. xxviii. 19.) This passage has been frequently appealed to by our opponents, who seem to consider it quite conclusive in their favour. But here we argue, (1.) That there is no exclusion of children. They formed part of the church under the Old Testament. If they were to be excluded from the New Testament church, it was necessary that this should be distinctly intimated; but no such intimation is given. Therefore we contend they must not be excluded. (2.) We argue that they are included in the commission—first, under the term of

nations, of which children form a part, they being the subjects of the sovereign, and enjoying the protection and benefit of law as well as others ; and next under the term *disciples*, which is the meaning of the first word here rendered *teach* : literally it reads, “ Go, *disciple* all nations, baptizing them ;” that is, formally make disciples of them by baptizing them. Under the law, children became, in virtue of circumcision, “ the disciples of Moses ;” under the gospel, they became, in virtue of baptism, the disciples of Christ. They are introduced into Christ’s school, placed under his care, and brought up in his nurture and admonition. “ Whosoever is circumcised,” says Paul, “ is debtor to do the whole law.” He was brought under a moral obligation to the law of Moses, by virtue of an act performed to him in infancy. The yoke was put upon his neck as soon as he came into the world. In this sense, Justin Martyr, who wrote only ninety years after Matthew, says, “ Several among us of sixty and seventy years old, of both sexes, who were *discipled* (or *made disciples*—the same word as Matthew employs)—*discipled to Christ in our childhood*, do still continue uncorrupted.” And at what period do we say ought children to be discipled to Christ ? Surely as soon as reason begins to dawn, and the sooner they are recognised as disciples the better. As to the mode of their admission, the language of Matthew, to which Justin evidently refers, places it beyond all doubt that it was by baptism. “ Disciple all nations, *baptizing* them”—that is, make them disciples in the way of baptizing them—declare them to be mine by administering to them the sacred symbol of Christianity. This form of speech is very common in Scripture. Thus Acts xv. 9, “ And put no difference between them, purifying

their hearts by faith ;" *i. e.*, in the way of purifying, or by having purified their hearts, he showed there was no difference between them. It is vain to raise captious objections here. Baptism, no doubt, cannot make one a disciple who was *in no sense* a disciple before ; but it is the formal constitution of the relationship : it is the sacramental initiation into the school of Christ. And it is perfectly clear that the whole passage in Matthew has a bearing on the primary introduction and initiation of the Gentiles into the Christian Church.*

In virtue of this world-wide commission the apostles went forth ; and, had they not been met by the resistance of unbelief, they would certainly have carried it literally into effect, by bringing all men, without exception of age, rank, or nation, within the pale of the visible Church. In judging of the extent of the apostolic commission, we must look, not to its actual effects, but to its original design. And surely God the Father did not mean that any should be excluded merely on account of their age from becoming the subjects of the kingdom of his dear Son, to whom he said, " Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the ends of the earth for thy possession." He did not say, They shall be thine only when they come to a certain age ; but before that, they must be regarded as belonging to the kingdom of Satan, and on no account and in no sense can they be received as part of thy church, or receive the sign of thy disciples. No : he proceeds on the assumption that he has a right to absolute and universal sovereignty ; and the promise to him is, " Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth. I will make

* See Note E—*Baptist Noel's Essay on Christian Baptism.*

thy name to be remembered in all generations; therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever."

V. Our fundamental principle is confirmed by the recorded instances of baptism in Scripture. Here it becomes us to remember that the Acts of the Apostles present us merely with the history of the foundation of the Christian church; and we cannot expect therefore to find those notices which form the history of a church once constituted. It exhibits the conversion of the Jews and the Gentiles, and may be regarded as the first missionary intelligence of the church of Christ. Our missionaries, when sent to heathen lands, though they practise the baptism of children, do not think it necessary to record this fact. They dwell on the conversion of men and women, with whom they have primarily to deal, and whose baptism they content themselves with narrating. That of the children is taken for granted. It is no proof of the power and triumph of the gospel; it is merely a proof of the conversion of the parents, which may be mentioned incidentally and inferentially, but without any specific notice. It may be a very interesting event to the parents, but hardly such to the Church, to know how many children were baptized, and what names were given them. Now, as might be expected, it is exactly in this form that we find the narrative of the first evangelists of Christianity. They had to do with grown up men and women. They were sent to plant the churches with the first "trees of righteousness," and they were naturally more concerned to speak about the plant, than the shoots and branches that it bore when inserted in the Christian soil. Still there are just such incidental notices as we might have anticipated; showing that they

proceeded on the ancient principle of the divine administration, and that in admitting the parent they admitted the whole household. The instances of baptism generally recorded, are those of great multitudes. Among the few instances of the baptism of individuals recorded, amounting only to nine, no less than four are cases in which the whole family is said to have been baptized with the head.

We refer to the cases of Cornelius, of Stephanas, of Lydia, and of the jailer of Philippi. It is true it is not said, in so many words, that these households included children; and we must candidly allow that it is *possible* they *may not*. Our Baptist brethren will, we hope, be equally candid, and grant it is possible, nay highly probable, *they may*. Our argument here is not merely *inferential*; we do not argue that, as it is very likely some children were included in these households, therefore the apostles must be supposed to have baptized children. Our argument is *analogical*, and may be stated thus:—*First*, We find that under the Old Testament whole households were circumcised, as in the case of Abraham and his household; and when a stranger was admitted into the Church of Israel, his children were admitted along with him. Now when we find that the apostles frequently baptized whole households, we feel warranted from analogy to conclude they would proceed on the same principle. It is not the fact standing *alone*, but the fact viewed in connection with the whole previous practice of the Church. *Secondly*, We place considerable weight on the connection stated between the believer and his household, as the ground on which baptism was administered to it. “I baptized the household *of Stephanas*.” “He was baptized and all

his straightway." "She was baptized and *her* household." It is not easy to see how, on the opposite theory, this should have been mentioned at all. For, if each individual was baptized only on his or her conversion and profession of faith, why include them under the head of the house? But on our principle it admits of an easy and natural explanation. The children, and even the servants and their children, were the property of the master of the house, and it was in virtue of their pertaining to him that they received the outward badge of Christian discipleship. The whole household of Stephanas—every one pertaining to him—*all his* were baptized; thenceforth they became a Christian household. They were grouped into a "church in the house," a phrase which implies that the whole domestic relations had become sanctified and christianized. *Thirdly*, This view receives strong confirmation from what Paul said to the jailer before baptizing his family, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, *and thy house*." In uttering these words, I am convinced that Paul had in his eye the language of Moses, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death: therefore choose life, that both thou *and thy seed* may live."—(Deut. xxx. 19.) There can be no doubt as to the meaning of Moses; and as applied by Paul, "thou and thy house shall be saved," can we suppose him to have meant any thing less, than that, on his believing, not only he but his children would be interested in God's covenant of mercy? Can we really imagine he meant nothing more than to say, Thou shall be saved, and thy family too if they believe, or when they come to believe? This would no doubt be true; but it would

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have been equally true in this sense if he had said, "Thou shalt be saved, and all the town of Philippi!" Our friends think they have got an insuperable argument on their side from what follows, "And he rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." There! they say, not only he but his household rejoiced, believing in God; how could infants rejoice or believe in God? Unfortunately, however, for them, the original will not bear out this notion; for the word *believing* is in the singular number, agreeing with the jailer, and not the household, and the literal sense is, that he rejoiced with all his house *because he believed* in God—or, *having believed* in God, he rejoiced with all his house. This, you will perceive, confirms our view, and overthrows the objection. And what more common in Scripture, as well as in ordinary language, than to speak of a household rejoicing, including the little ones, though they can only rejoice after their own innocent manner? Children, we know, were taken up when mere infants to the Jewish feasts, as we see in the case of Samuel and of our Lord; and yet Moses has said, "Thou shalt eat there before the Lord thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou *and thy household*."—(Deut. xiv. 26.) How absurd would it be for any to argue from this text, that infants could not be included in the household, because infants could not eat or rejoice before the Lord!

In fine, the fact, so frequently recorded, of the apostolic practice of baptizing households, is exactly the form in which we might expect to find the baptism of children recorded. What we plead for, as we formerly observed, is not the baptism of *infants* as such, but of children—the children of Christian parents; so that

our practice might with great propriety be termed Household baptism, or Family baptism. Are our Baptist brethren in the habit of baptizing whole families? Or do we ever hear of their baptizing at all, as the apostles did, by households? No; they recognize no tie between the parent and child in the article of baptism. And were they to baptize more than the head of the family at a time, they would never speak of "baptizing *all his* straightway;" they would avoid such a phrase as liable to be misunderstood, and speak only of baptizing such and such individuals.

There is another passage which I may add in illustration of the practice of the apostles, in 1 Cor. x. 1: "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." He represents them as passing under the cloud and through the sea, and in this way figuratively, through the emblem of water, they were all as it were baptized unto Moses, declared to be his disciples, and placed under his government. Now, it is certain that this included the whole people, young as well as old; for infants passed through the Red Sea, and partook of this baptism as well as their parents. Here, then, we certainly have a passage in which the baptism of children is mentioned, and mentioned too in connection with Christian privilege; for the apostle is showing the identity between the church of the old and new testament: "For they did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink (with us); for they drank of the rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ." But the force of this passage, viewed as an argument

for the admission of children to baptism, lies in the manner in which it is applied by Paul. He evidently employs it as a mere figure of speech; but the very circumstance of his so employing it shows, that the practice of admitting large multitudes of men, women, and children, into the Church by baptism, was so frequent and familiar, that the phrase, when used figuratively with reference to the Israelites, would be easily understood. If children were not admitted with their parents to baptism, there would have been no analogy or resemblance to the baptism of the whole Israelitish nation in passing through the Red Sea.

VI. The last argument in proof of our position is, that children are partakers of the blessings signified in baptism, namely, remission of sins, regeneration, and life eternal.

It will hardly be disputed by any, that to some children at least, the Lord will give the whole signification of baptism. And shall we deny the outer shell to those who enjoy the kernel? Shall we refuse the casket to those who have got the pearl? "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." This was arguing from a mere temporary and not a saving blessing, from the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit to the outward sign of baptism: how much more may this be argued from the whole signification of baptism?

It is vain to attempt evading this plain reason, by asking how can we know that certain children are partakers of these blessings, so as to administer to them the sign. This objection proceeds on the fallacious assumption, that the administration of baptism signifies

that the person baptized is a Christian in the sight of God—a regenerated person. Nothing can be a greater mistake. Baptism is indeed a sign of regeneration, but it is not a sign that the person baptized is regenerated. This would lead to the most preposterous conclusions. It is merely the external symbol of the blessing itself—not a declaration that the person receiving it has been made a partaker of that blessing. He may not receive it till long after being baptized—he may never receive it at all. But what we say is, that children, as such, are capable of pardon and regeneration; that if, as we must grant, they may get to heaven, they must, ere they get there be “sanctified, and washed, and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God;” and that, as many children may receive those benefits, so children, *as such*, may receive the outward symbol of this washing and sanctification. Baptism, when administered to children, just says that there is salvation for children—that “of such is the kingdom of heaven”—where the term *such*, as we formerly observed, is a distinctive term, intimating, not that these children in particular whom Christ held in his arms, nor all children in general, but that children, as such, are partakers of heaven. And what is baptism in comparison to this? Why, it is the mere outer raiment of the Christian. And surely, as our Lord says, “the body is more than raiment?” If children, as such, may be baptized by the Spirit, they surely may be baptized with water. It is exactly such an argument as our opponents might employ to show, that women as well as men may be admitted to the Lord’s table. Women, they would say, should be admitted to the Supper, because women as such, as well as men, are partakers of the spiritual blessings of the gos-

pel. Precisely so : and children, we say, may be admitted to baptism, because children as such, as well as men, are partakers of spiritual blessings.

Some may suppose that, according to this reasoning, children may be admitted to the Lord's Supper as well as baptism. Granting that it should lead to this conclusion, all that can be inferred from it would be, that we are inconsistent in not admitting children to the Lord's table; but this would not prove that they should be excluded from baptism. But it is idle to talk of this. We hold that children who have been admitted into the church by baptism have a *remote right* to the Lord's Supper—*i. e.*, a right to partake of it as soon as they become capable of doing so according to the institution, and that none but baptized persons should be admitted to the table. But there is this obvious difference between the two sacraments, that the one is the sacrament of initiation, the other the sacrament of nutrition. Baptism denotes our union with Christ—a thing of which children are capable; the Supper denotes our communion with Christ—a thing of which they are not capable. Baptism is an ordinance of *reception* merely, in which no action is required. The person is *washed*, which is the act of another. He does not wash himself. The Supper, again, is an ordinance of *action*. The body of Christ is to be eaten, and his blood drunk, symbolically, and in active remembrance of his death, by the communicant; of which the child is as yet incompetent. In this respect, there is an analogy with the ancient sacraments. Circumcision was necessary to the reception of the Passover, and it was granted to infants of eight days' old; but such infants could not eat of the paschal lamb. The Passover was a family meal, indeed; but it was

observed by those grown up, standing with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand; and children were not permitted to partake till they were instructed in its meaning. "It shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover," &c.—(Exod. xii. 26.)

We have thus stated the Scripture authority which we have for the admission of children to the ordinance of baptism. It is not on any one of these proofs, taken singly, that we found the doctrine, but on the whole taken in connection. And when we consider that so much can be said in favour of the admission of children, the reasons must be very strong, and cogent, and explicit indeed, which can warrant us to exclude them. But before noticing these, we may remark, that besides the direct proofs from Scripture which we have alleged, we might have adduced various *presumptions*, founded on Scripture, in confirmation of our view. We can only glance for the present at some of these. Children are certainly capable of moral corruption and condemnation. They are not capable of actual faith, indeed, and neither are they capable of actual sin. They have "not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." But they all died in Adam; they are all shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin, and "are by nature the children of wrath even as others." When we seriously reflect on this awful truth, and consider that they are naturally utterly unfit and unworthy to enter into that heavenly kingdom into which nothing can enter that is unclean; that corruption cannot inherit incorruption; and that consequently they must be born again before they can enter heaven:—when, moreover, we consider that so

many are cut off in infancy, that it has been calculated that one-fourth or one-fifth of the human family die before reaching maturity, are not such considerations so many presumptions in favour of their having the outward symbol of regeneration in baptism? Again, as all that belongs to the believer belongs to God, so the Christian parent may truly say, in devoting his infant offspring to Him, "Of thine own have we given thee." "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord; and the fruit of the womb is his reward." Again, Christian parents will be solicitous to bring their children to Christ. But, if not by baptism, there is no other ordinance by which they can formally do so. Baptism is the only gate by which any can be admitted into the Church, which is his body. If this gate is closed, how shall entrance be obtained? And then, what a privilege and a consolation is thus afforded to the Christian parent! Conscious that the poor, immortal being, to whom his heart clings in natural affection, has derived through him the mortal taint of sin, and may die and perish in his sin, what a brightening hope is opened up to him through the portal of baptism, that "as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive," and that he is permitted to dedicate his child to God in this blessed ordinance, which speaks of purification and salvation, in the faith of God's covenant promise, "I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed!" And then the obligations under which it lays him to bring up this infant disciple of Christ, from his earliest dawn of being, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord! But all this, important as it must appear to every unbiassed mind, is as nothing in comparison to the blessed effects of the ordinance on the baptized, when, in after life,

they are enabled to improve their baptism. And so much am I satisfied that the gist of the whole question lies here, that I would solemnly and affectionately beseech all of you to postpone your final judgment on it, till we have come to consider this part of the subject.

We have not adverted to another argument which we consider quite clear in our favour, viz., the testimony of *antiquity*. Nothing admits of being more clearly demonstrated than that the baptism of children was practised from the very earliest ages of the Church. Thus Irenæus, who was born before the death of the Evangelist John, and who flourished in the generation immediately succeeding him, when it was not possible for the Church to be ignorant of what was done as to the baptizing of children in the times of the apostles, writes, that "Christ Jesus came to save all persons by himself—all, I mean, who by him are *regenerated unto God*—infants and little ones, and children, and youths, and elder persons." Now, by "*regenerated unto God*," it can be shown that he means *baptized* unto God; for he calls the commission to baptize all nations, the commission to regenerate all nations; using the word regeneration for its sign and symbol. Again, Origen, a very early writer, tells us, that "the Church received it as delivered by the apostles, that baptism should be granted even to children." And Augustine declares that this is "a doctrine held by the Church universal, and that not as instituted by councils, but as delivered by the authority of the apostles alone."* The Papists therefore are quite mistaken when they allege that pædo-baptism

* Wall's Hist. of Infant Baptism, p. 15, &c. Bucan. Inst. Theol. 678.

rests not on Scripture precept or example, but solely on the decrees of the Church.

We shall only mention the interesting fact, that the primitive "Church in the Catacombs" at Rome, and the Waldenses, have been proved to have practised the baptism of children. Nor shall we dwell on the fact, that at the period of the Reformation, when the whole system of antichristian error and superstition was subverted, and when every dogma and practice of the Church was subjected to a thorough revision and unsparing reform, according to the Word of God, it was never proposed by any of the reformed Churches, or any of the reformed divines, to repudiate the baptism of children. The doctrine was, indeed, placed on its right scriptural basis, and divested of all superstitious additions. But, with the exception of a small sect which sprung up in Germany, called Anabaptists, not a voice was raised against the practice. Of that sect I shall not here say a single word, as it was so discreditable that our brethren the Baptists do not choose to be identified with it. But this I will say, that, differing as our reformers did on many points of ecclesiastical practice from each other, on the right of children to baptism there was a perfect harmony among them; and what is more (as we may afterwards have occasion to show), between Luther, who perhaps went the shortest distance from Rome of all the reformers, and John Knox, who went the farthest, cutting off right and left whatever savoured of superstition, there was an entire agreement, not only as to the subjects and the mode, but on the nature, design, and effects of Christian baptism.

LECTURE IV.

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

IT is a remarkable fact, that while our opinion as to the admission of children by baptism rests, as we have seen in last lecture, on a great variety of positive proofs, the opinion of those opposed to us rests, not on positive evidence, but on mere presumptions and objections. The Baptist theory on this point, in so far as it differs from ours, is a mere system of negations ; their faith rests on difficulties which they cannot solve, and apparent incongruities which they cannot reconcile. We say, in so far as their theory differs from ours ; for on some points we have no dispute with them. We agree with them that the believer should be baptized ; we have no objections to the practice of adult baptism. Had we been in the same circumstances with the apostles, we would have exactly followed them in baptizing all men and women who professed their faith in Christ ; in similar circumstances we are prepared to do so still. It is in vain, therefore, to tell us, that they rest on the positive evidence of the Word in baptizing adults ; for here there is no difference between us. But it is when they proceed to deny that children also are to be admitted with the parents, that they differ from us ; and here we say they have nothing to go upon but mere presumptions and inferences, and these presumptions and inferences

merely negative. They can only reason thus : Believers were baptized by the apostles ; but children cannot believe ; and *therefore* our *inference* is, that children cannot be baptized. We have a mass of positive evidence on our side ; they have no positive evidence to bring against us. In answer to all our arguments, they are perpetually putting the question, " How can these things be ? " No class of Christians are more loud in demanding positive proof from us in behalf of our system. But when the proof is placed before them in all its latitude and longitude, they meet it with a long list of objections and presumptions ; and when asked for their own positive proof for the exclusion of children, they reply by handing us an inference. This mode of reasoning, in the matters of God, is far from being a safe or legitimate one. Nothing is more easy than to conjure up scruples and objections against any part of the revealed scheme. God's ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts. The difference is so great, that the human mind, once bent on making the two things square with each other, will pronounce as the height of absurdity, what, after all, may be the highest wisdom.*

Besides this, there is a plausibility in the objections of our brethren, arising partly from the cause now hinted at, the superhuman and unworldly character of the

* The more acute and ingenious the writer is, the more successful will he be in suggesting difficulties. We might refer, as an illustration, to " Lectures on Baptism, by the late William Shireff, minister of the gospel, Glasgow." The greater portion of this ingenious author's book is occupied by what he calls " Presumptions against Infant Baptism." Alas ! people may get up, quite as plausibly and as easily, Presumptions against Infant Salvation. We venture to say, that not one of the presumptions mentioned by Mr Shireff might not, with equal appearance of reason, be urged against the idea that infants will ever reach the kingdom of heaven !

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gospel scheme ; and partly from their fixing on the account of the first baptisms of the Christian Church, as the only data on which we are warranted to found our reasonings ; but principally from the fact, acknowledged on all hands, that the Bible addresses itself to persons of ripe years—to men and women—demanding from all, as necessary to salvation, the exercises of repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus. The former causes we have already noticed ; but the unfairness of taking advantage of the fact now referred to in the present controversy, must be at once apparent when we consider that they themselves, *on other occasions*, must make an exception in favour of infants. For the sake of bringing out my meaning here, let me suppose that I am one of those who deny the salvation of infants. I begin, then, by appealing to the silence of Scripture on this subject, and, rejecting all cumulative or inferential proof, I demand an express declaration. ‘Where is such a declaration to be found ? Do we not, on the contrary, find that every where men are commanded to repent and believe the gospel ? and that without faith it is impossible to please God ? And how can infants believe or repent ? Does not the gospel uniformly address itself to men and women ? How then can you speak of infant salvation ? The gospel has nothing to do with infants. Talk not of promises and privileges ! All the promises of God are addressed to faith ; all the privileges of the gospel Church imply the possession of spiritual character. How can such things be predicated of infants ?’ The preposterousness and unfairness of such a mode of reasoning would at once be felt by our Baptist brethren ; and they would be ready to reply, Such passages imply, no doubt, that the persons addressed are

adults ; but they do not imply that there are no children in the world, or that no children can be saved. Right ! but they are quite ready to avail themselves of the advantage which such passages afford when speaking of infant baptism ; and yet what is baptism after all, when compared with salvation ?

It is of importance, however, to examine the objections of our opponents ; for it will generally be found that the errors of good and conscientious men rest on some semblance of the truth. Unlike fatal heresy, which lies in direct hostility to some saving truth, the doctrinal mistakes of Christians arise from placing an undue weight on some saving truth, and allowing it to bulk so much in their eye as to hide from them some other truth. In this way, too, we may discover the secret reasons which prevent some good men from seeing the force of our arguments, and which have led so many to stumble at the threshold, till, having renounced their early baptism, and submitted to rebaptization, they find themselves inextricably entangled in party prejudice.

In general it may be observed, that many have been led to entertain scruples about the baptism of children, from having adopted extravagant notions in regard to the spirituality of the gospel. Deeply impressed themselves with the spiritual demands of Christ—convinced that real Christianity is matter of personal experience—and perceiving, with painful concern, how many rest contented with the mere external form, and even with the name of Christians given them at their baptism, they are led, step by step, to form a theory, according to which spirituality is every thing, and the external Church vanishes into invisibility. This is frequently attended with a morbid state of religious sentiment, the symptoms of

which are a total incapacity to discriminate between the visible and invisible Church, and a consciousness of having reached some ideal eminence, from which they are entitled to look down with contempt on all other Christians.

To guard against this extreme, we must bear in mind that the Church of Christ, so long as she is in this world, is a visible corporeal society, and possesses external privileges, which, in the nature of things, must necessarily be shared by the spiritual children of God in common with many who are so only nominally, or by profession; that there is an outward baptism with water, as well as an inward baptism with the Spirit, and for hundreds that receive the former, there may not be one in a hundred that receive the latter; and that true spirituality, instead of confounding these two things together, just appears in being able to distinguish them. The Society of Quakers, who carry this spiritualizing theory to its legitimate results, deny consistently enough the use of water baptism altogether. If we are baptized with the Spirit, they say, where is the need of being baptized either in or with water? According to this fanatical idea, the written word, the preaching of the gospel, and the sacraments, may be all dispensed with; and the Church on earth is identified with the Church in heaven, which, being composed only of saints and perfect men, stands in no need of ordinances at all! The Church of Christ, however, as a visible society, must have outward privileges by which its members may be distinguished in the sight of man, as well as inward graces by which they are distinguished in the sight of God—privileges which the worldling may despise, and the hypocrite may abuse, but by which all will be judged at last, and which shall

be found either "the savour of life unto life, or the savour of death unto death." It is one of the main duties of the gospel minister to guard all against resting on these privileges, and with this view to stir them up to a spiritual improvement of them, pointing to the graces which they exhibit to our faith. But it is altogether preposterous to hold that the graces supersede the use of the privileges, or that the privileges are in themselves wholly meaningless and useless. To judge aright of the value of the external privileges of the Church, we must contrast them, not with the spiritual character of the Christian, of which they are merely the emblems, but with the world lying in wickedness around us, with the heart deceitful and desperately wicked within us, and with the hell of everlasting curse beneath us, and then they will appear in their true light, as "exceeding great and precious."

Another class of objectors are carried away by a vague prejudice against all reasoning deduced from the Old Testament. They insist that baptism, being a New Testament ordinance, must be judged of entirely from New Testament evidence. If by baptism they mean the outward rite, we agree with them; but if they mean the whole doctrine about baptism, they might just as well say that the doctrines of the atonement or of justification by faith are New Testament doctrines, and that Paul was entirely wrong in bringing evidence in their support from the Old Testament. We draw no argument from the ancient Scriptures but what is agreeable to the analogy of faith developed in the writings of the apostles; and as the very force of our reasoning lies in showing that there is a divinely established connection between the privileges of the Old and the New Testa-

ment Churches, it is rather too much to expect that, to please our opponents, we should dismiss Moses and the prophets as incompetent witnesses in the case. "All Scripture is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness."

A third class, again, object to the whole of our evidence for the baptism of children because it is cumulative, or, as they are pleased to call it, presumptive evidence. We grant that it is cumulative; that is, it does not in point of fact rest on any one passage of Scripture, but on many; but we maintain that all the particulars in the assemblage contribute to strengthen the cause. We do not admit, nor do we ask you to suppose, that our proofs, taken singly, may be unsatisfactory, but taken collectively may warrant our practice; for we hold that each proof we have adduced is satisfactory, so far as it goes, in strengthening our general proposition. And is it not in this way that God has been pleased to teach us some of the most vital truths of his Word? How do we substantiate the truth of our Lord's divinity? Is it not by a long series of cumulative evidence?—by going back to the Old Testament—arguing from the names given him—from the works and attributes ascribed to him—from a variety of proofs scattered throughout Scripture? And how unfair would it be to say, This is all presumptive evidence—not one of these passages taken by itself is sufficient to support the doctrine! We take the doctrine of baptism, as of the deity of Christ, even as God has been pleased to reveal it; and our faith in it is confirmed by finding it supported by such a close and connected array of proofs. See, we say, how it agrees with the whole tenor of the divine administration from the beginning. See how it is supported

by the way in which God constituted his ancient Church. See how it is countenanced by the general terms of the commission of Christ, and by the practice of his apostles. And see how many passages can be quoted to show, that under the New Testament children were not excluded from the Church, but were expressly said to belong to the kingdom of heaven—to have the promise made to them—and to be holy. This is not presumptive, but plain, positive evidence, which leads directly to the conclusion that children should be admitted to baptism, by which they are declared to be the members of Christ's Church.

But we may now consider more particularly some of the most popular objections against our practice.

I. And first, there is a general objection taken and felt by many at our reasoning so much from the Abrahamic covenant, on the ground of the great difference between the Old and New Testament Church in point of spirituality. Such persons are apt to suppose that we have transplanted a carnal rite from the ancient ritual among the spiritualities of the gospel; and they talk much of the Jewish Church having been now amalgamated in or given place to the Christian.

Now, we grant that there is a great difference between the two *dispensations* in point of spirituality; we grant that there was much, very much, that was carnal in the ancient economy; and nothing distinguishes the gospel more than its having delivered the Church from the carnal ordinances under which it was formerly kept, as under a schoolmaster. But the grand fallacy lying at the root of this objection is, that it would separate between the Jewish and the Christian Church as two distinct churches, which may be contrasted or compared

with each other,—the one church being carnal, the other spiritual,—the one church being the type, and the other the antitype. This is an entire delusion; but it is one that bears so much the semblance of the truth, that, unless very closely examined, it is apt to mislead. Let it then be carefully remarked, (1.) That the Scripture never contrasts the Jewish with the Christian Church. If you look over the New Testament you may find *the Jews* often contrasted with *the Gentiles*; but you will never find the Jewish Church contrasted with the Christian Church. You may read of *Jews* and *Gentiles* being amalgamated into one church; but never of the Jewish Church being amalgamated with the Christian Church. You may read of the Jewish dispensation being abolished, and giving place to the Christian; but never of the Jewish Church being abolished, and giving place to the Christian. It is true that the ancient Church was, in point of fact, composed of Jews; and therefore we may sometimes speak of the Jewish Church as distinct from the Christian, which is composed both of Jews and Gentiles. But this mode of speech has been entirely misconstrued into the notion that the one Church has taken the place of the other; whereas the apostle constantly speaks of them as but one Church. When they speak of *Gentiles as such*, they say they are introduced into the old Church, which was from the beginning. When they speak of *Jews as such*, they speak of them as amalgamated with the Gentiles into this one Church; but never that one church was amalgamated with, or gave place to, another church. It is evident that this mistake arises from confounding what is said of the junction of Jews and Gentiles into one Church, by the removal of all that was peculiar to the ancient economy, with an-

other thing altogether, which never entered into the minds of the apostles—the junction of two Churches.

(2.) We grant there was much that was carnal and typical about the ancient Church, but still it was a Church—the true spiritual Church of God. It is easy to speak, in rambling and sweeping terms, about the old Church being merely a type of the new, and the Jewish nation being typical of the holy nation, the Christian Church. We grant that it was so, considered *as a nation*; but that nation was at the same time a Church, enjoying all the privileges of a Church state. “To them were committed the oracles of God,”—“to them belonged the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises.” The same persons who formed the nation may also have formed the Church; but there the Church was, notwithstanding.

In the same way we grant that circumcision and the passover were types, as every thing under that economy had a typical character; and yet they retained also the sacramental character. The passover was a type of Christ our passover; but still it was, at the same time, a sign and seal of God’s covenant with Israel. Circumcision may have been typical of Christian sanctification; but still it did not lose its sacramental character as a seal of the covenant.

II. The next objection we shall notice is founded on the words of Paul, that Abraham “received circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, being yet uncircumcised;” from which they would infer that circumcision was given to Abraham, and to him only, as a seal of spiritual blessings because he already had faith; but to his natural posterity, many of whom

had not his faith, it served merely as a sign of their lineal descent from Abraham, as a badge to distinguish them from other nations, and as a pledge of the earthly inheritance of Canaan. This, however, is to put an interpretation on the apostle's words which they were never meant to bear. What he intended to show, as appears from the context, is, that Abraham was a justified man before he was circumcised, and thus refute the error of the Jews, that circumcision was necessary to salvation. And to confirm this, the apostle says that circumcision was, in his case, the seal of a righteousness or justification which he possessed before. But does it therefore follow that circumcision was not a seal of justification in its own nature and design? We have here a repetition of the same confusion of ideas to which we formerly adverted. Circumcision was a sign of justification and regeneration; but it was not a sign that the person to whom it was administered was a justified and regenerated person, any more than baptism is. The apostle states the *fact*, that Abraham was already justified before circumcision; but even in his case circumcision was not granted as a declaration or confirmation of the fact that he was justified. It was given him simply as a seal of the covenant, though in his case it was the seal of a covenant in which he was already personally interested. But, in receiving circumcision, Abraham received it as a seal not only for himself but for all his posterity. And can we suppose that it was not given in the same way to Isaac and Jacob, "the heirs with him of the same promise,"—namely, as a seal of the covenant of justification,—and that it would not be improved by them afterwards as such?

Oh! say our opponents, as given to *them* it was

merely a badge of *natural descent* from Abraham, and of their title to the temporal blessings of that covenant! This is a mere gratuitous assertion. There was but one covenant, and that, as we formerly saw, included both temporal and spiritual blessings; and but one seal or symbol, and that was circumcision, which referred both to spiritual and temporal blessings. What right have they to limit its signification to temporals only? But as there must be always some ground on which men of sense and piety rest their objections, we shall endeavour to find out where the fallacy lies here also. Circumcision, they say, was the sign of natural descent from Abraham, or of being born a Jew, which was typical of spiritual descent, or being born a Christian. Now, here it is evident, they suppose, that the Jewish child was circumcised simply in virtue of his being a son of Abraham according to the flesh. But mark the mistake! True, those that were circumcised were Jewish children, sons of Abraham by lineal descent; but they were circumcised, not as *Jewish children*, or *in virtue of their lineal descent*, but *in virtue of the covenant* which God made with their fathers. This is the distinction which Paul makes, Rom. ix. 6-8. "For they are not all Israel which are of Israël: neither, because they are the *seed of Abraham*, are they all *children*: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the *children of the flesh*, these are not the children of God: but the *children of the promise* (or covenant) are counted for the seed." The distinction may appear at first so small as to be almost imperceptible, and hence the mistake into which some so naturally fall; but it will be found to involve the whole question in dispute. The benefits of the covenant were confined almost solely to

the nation of the Jews; so that circumcision became, in point of fact, a kind of national badge; but it was not granted to them in virtue of their lineal or carnal connection with Abraham, but in virtue of the covenant with Abraham,—in other words, in virtue of a moral, spiritual, and supernatural transaction between God and them as a people. “Ye are the children of the promise, and of the covenant which God made with your fathers.” And hence servants, and proselytes of other nations, though not lineally descended from Abraham, were, in virtue of the same covenant, admitted to circumcision. The tie was of a moral, not of a mere natural or fleshly, kind. And the same holds true of the children of Christian parents. It is not on the carnal ground of their being lineally descended from Christian parents, or in virtue of this, that they are admitted to baptism; but on the spiritual ground, that, being so connected, they are interested in the covenant of grace, and so entitled to receive its seal and symbol.

III. The next objection, on which great stress has been laid, is, that faith, or a profession of faith and repentance, is required of all who are to be admitted to Christian baptism. The two passages generally quoted in support of this, is that in Mark xvi. 16: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;”—and that in Acts viii. 36, 37: “What doth hinder me,” said the eunuch, “to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.” Here, they say, faith is imperatively required as a prerequisite or condition of baptism. The child is incapable of believing, and therefore, as it cannot perform this condition, it cannot be baptized. And hence they call

theirs, by way of distinction from ours, “believer’s baptism.”

The first passage quoted from Mark, we regard as quite inapplicable to the question. Our Lord is not there stating the pre-requisites to baptism, but the pre-requisites to salvation. These are two—viz., faith and baptism. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved”—*i. e.*, faith and a profession of faith, evinced by receiving baptism, are necessary to salvation, and will be followed by it. Similar declarations abound in the New Testament. Thus, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” But though every body knows that faith in and a confession of Christ are the ordinary means of salvation, what has this to do with the admission of children to baptism? If the passage in question has any relation to children at all, it must exclude them, not from baptism, but from salvation, for it is of this that it speaks: nay, it must not only exclude them from salvation, but actually consign them all to perdition; for it follows, “he that believeth not shall be damned.” Children believe not; therefore, say the Baptists, they cannot be baptized;—but they are bound, if they would be consistent, to go further, and say they cannot be saved, for he that believeth not shall be damned!

Is any thing more necessary to show that this passage refers to adults only, and to them not in regard to baptism, but to salvation? Is it not self-apparent that the conditions and duties required in Scripture of adults, must always be understood with an exception in favour of children? Thus, when Paul says, “We commanded

you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat," would it not be the height of absurdity to argue, that since children could not work, neither should they eat?

Still further, this text, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," if adduced to show the condition of baptism, proves more than Baptists will themselves allow; for it would follow that none but true believers could be baptized—that we must be positively assured of this before we can apply for or receive the ordinance. But all that our Baptists obtain is a profession of faith. Now it is not said, He that professes his faith, but he that "*believeth* and is baptized shall be saved." Our Lord could never mean that a mere profession of faith could save us. This unfortunate text, therefore, must be wholly set aside as having no bearing on, or connection with, the subject.

But, say our brethren on the other side, previous instruction and a profession of faith are at least surely required in the other passage, where Philip said to the Ethiopian, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he baptized him." I do not answer this, as some have lately done,* by denouncing it as an interpolation. It may not exist in some of the most ancient copies of the New Testament; but, taking it as it stands, it records no more than what we might expect, and presents an example which every Christian minister will follow in the same circumstances. In the case of every adult received for the first time into the Church, previous instruction is necessary; and we demand, as Philip did from this man, a personal profession of faith, repentance, and new obedience. Were we addressing a

* Halley on the Sacraments.

company of unbelieving Jews or heathens, as Peter was, we would say with him, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you." But we would not thereby consider ourselves as excluding children: on the contrary, we would add, as he did, for a further inducement to repentance, "The promise is unto you and to your children." Nay, a profession of faith and obedience is required of all who would receive baptism for their children; so that ours also is believer's baptism in this sense, that none but professing believers receive the ordinance either for themselves or for their children.

This is certainly the most plausible argument on the opposite side; but, first, it derives all its plausibility from the fact, that the Acts of the Apostles record only the beginning of the gospel of Christ, the laying of the foundations of the Christian Church by the admission of the Gentiles. The apostles, in short, were missionaries; and the reports of all missionaries are chiefly occupied with the conversion of men and women. We may remark of the argument, further, that it is merely *inferential*. It is not pretended that there is any express mention of the exclusion of children; but they reach this conclusion by a circuitous process of reasoning and induction in this way,—The apostles instructed their converts, and required a profession of faith before baptizing them, but children are incapable of instruction and professing faith; therefore we infer that they did not baptize children. Besides, the argument is *unsound* and *inconclusive*. In regard to the Lord's Supper, we have an explicit rule laid down, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat." The conclusion from this is quite legitimate, that a man must be capable of self-examination before par-

taking of that feast. But we have no such explicit rule in regard to baptism—no passage in which it is said, Let a man examine himself, profess his faith, and so be baptized. We have only the fact recorded, that when men and women came for baptism, the apostles required them to make a profession of their faith; and all we can legitimately draw from this is, that when men and women come to us in the same circumstances, we must require from them a profession of their faith. No conclusion can be drawn from this as to the exclusion of children. We are warranted to say that this was the rule which the apostles followed in the reception of adults; but no more. We are not warranted to conclude merely from their practice in regard to adults, what would be their practice in regard to children. It is a strange leap and an adventurous one to conclude from this, in the absence of all positive evidence, and in the face of all that may be alleged in favour of family baptism, that they *did not* baptize children.

But there is another and more important sense in which, in perfect consistency with our practice, we acknowledge the order indicated in these passages which speak of faith and repentance as preceding baptism. This arrangement denotes, we conceive, not the order in which the mere outward rite should be administered, or the age at which persons may be admitted to its reception; but the divinely-appointed order in which God confers the benefits of redemption on men. First, they must repent and believe, and then God will perform to them the promise which he sealed to them in baptism. Thus he said of Abraham, “I know him that he will command his children, and his household after him; and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and

judgment, *that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him.*" Mark, that the rite of circumcision had already been granted, both to Abraham and his household ; but the promise thus confirmed was dependent on their future behaviour, or, to speak more correctly, it was only in the way of their being enabled to believe and repent, that the sealed promise would be fulfilled, and that the Lord would "bring upon them what He had spoken." In like manner, by parity of reason, when Peter said (Acts ii. 38), "Repent and be baptized every one of you for the remission of sins, for the promise is unto you and to your children," he indicated the divinely-settled order in which the blessings of salvation would be conveyed. First, men must repent and believe, and then the promise, sealed to them in baptism, shall be fulfilled to them. If those, therefore, who have been baptized, whether in infancy or mature life, continue in the sins of the flesh and of the world, comforting themselves in their baptism, they are inverting this heavenly order which God observed in covenanting with them in baptism ; for their baptism implied and presupposed faith and repentance as necessary to salvation, in those of adult years at least ; and baptism, it may be observed, always presupposes that the person will live to believe, as well as believe that he may live. This, it must be admitted, is a consideration of infinitely more magnitude and practical moment than the mere time at which the outward ceremony of baptism should be dispensed. To dwell on the bare inference, that such passages seem to presuppose a profession of faith before the reception of the ordinance (an inference which we have seen by no means necessarily follows), is to make a very meagre and unspiritual im-

provement of the passages in question. Even granting that the man has made a profession of his faith, and has, in virtue of this, been baptized in adult years, still we would say to him, If, after this, you do not “keep the way of the Lord,” if you live, as you may do, in unbelief and impenitence, trusting to the mere fact of your baptism, you are inverting the holy order of that sacrament ; for in your baptism, God only covenanted to “bring upon you” the blessing of life in the way of your believing and repenting. The outward baptism with water you have already received, on the ground of some outward profession ; but the inward baptism with the Spirit, symbolized in the baptismal sign, and sealed in the baptismal promise, you cannot and shall not receive without a living faith in Christ and a true repentance. For see, it is said, “Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins ;” not that baptism is the remission of sins, or that the mere act of baptism with water implies that your sins are remitted—for this is the fatal delusion under which multitudes live and perish—but that your baptism binds you to repentance, and that repentance will be followed by the remission of sins. Repentance may, or it may not, precede baptism ; but it must precede salvation ; and therefore, at whatever time you have been baptized, “except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

Our brethren on the opposite side of this question must allow, that they are as much in danger of trusting to their baptism as we are to ours, if not more ; and it would surely be better to join us in warning men against such an abuse, than to exhaust the whole meaning of such texts on an argument against infant baptism !

IV. Another class of objectors, not capable of entering

into these reasonings, content themselves with the very simple objection that there is no express mention made in the New Testament of the baptism of "babes." A positive ordinance such as baptism, they argue, requires a positive appointment of its subjects; but we never find that the apostles were commanded to baptize, or actually did baptize, "infants."

To this it might be sufficient to reply by denying the allegation. Though we have no mention of *babes* or *infants*, it is certain that *children* are *expressly* mentioned in connection with baptism. This we have already proved, and it might be sufficient to remind you of such passages as the following: "*Baptize all nations*"—"Be baptized *every one of you*, for the promise is unto you and to *your children*"—"Now we brethren, as *Isaac was*, are the children of promise"—"Your children are *holy*." Besides, if men were baptized as *parents* and *heads of families*, this unquestionably includes the correlate of *offspring*. "He was baptized and *all his*"—"I baptized the household of *Stephanas*." If, instead of the misleading term *infants*, we look for *children* in the New Testament, we may be surprised to find how frequently they are recognized in connection with gospel privileges. Let the following instances suffice: "Lord, have mercy on *my son*; and the *child* was cured from that very hour"—"O woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And *her daughter* was made whole from that very hour"—"Jesus called a *little child* to him, and set him in the midst of them"—"Suffer little children to come unto me"—"Children, obey your *parents in the Lord*: for this is right. And ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord"—

“*From a child* thou has known the holy Scriptures”—
“The elder unto the elect lady and *her children*.”

If, notwithstanding this array of more or less explicit proofs, it is still insisted that, before admitting children, we must have a certain form of words expressly enjoining it, such as, “Thou shalt baptize children”—or “The apostles baptized children.”

To this we reply:—(1.) That we have no right to demand, in order to our reception of a revealed truth, that it shall be delivered to us *in a certain form*. God has taught us many things, not by express precept and example, but by inference and induction. Thus our Lord, when proving to the Sadducees the doctrine of the resurrection, does not produce, as they may have demanded from him, an express or direct proof; but he draws it by inference from the words, “I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. He is not the God of the dead but of the living;” adding, “Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures.” We must beware of prescribing to God in what way and on what conditions we will believe what he has delivered in his Word, or of saying, If you will show us the word *infant* mentioned in any instance in which the apostles baptized, we will believe. This is too much like the language of him who said, “If I see the print of the nails I will believe.” (2.) We reply, there are many other things besides the baptism of children which we are bound to receive from analogy, and without an express injunction. For example, though we are told expressly that the apostles baptized “men and women,” there is no place in which we are told expressly that women were admitted to the Lord’s table. There can be no doubt that they were; but we have no express precept for it. It may be said,

Oh! they are partakers of spiritual blessings as well as men, and in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female. Very true; but still this is merely analogical reasoning. The Lord's Supper is a positive ordinance; and, on the principle of our opponents, we must have a positive precept for their admission, or some express instance in which they were admitted by the apostles; and if a sect were to arise denying their right, arguing that we do not hear of women being among the apostles when the Supper was first instituted—that the apostle has said, “Let a *man* examine *himself*, and so let *him* eat”—how could we answer them but by those very arguments which we employ for the baptism of children? The same thing might be said of the change of the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week, of public assemblies on that day for the worship of God, and many other things which are most surely believed by us, though we have no explicit passage appointing them in so many words.

(3.) To the demand for an express authority for the admission of children, we may fairly reply by demanding an express authority for their exclusion. It will not do to say, they are excluded virtually and implicitly by the terms prescribed; we demand an *explicit* and *actual* exclusion. If, as admitted by our brethren, children were members of the Jewish Church for nearly 4000 years, there was little reason for an express statute for their admission if they were still to be continued members of the Church; but if they were to be excluded, there was the greatest reason for an express statute of excision. No inferences, no arguings from the spirituality of the Church, would have availed here. We were warranted to expect the most stringent prohibitions, run-

ning somewhat to this effect : “ The promise is unto you, but *not* to your children. Suffer *no* little children to come unto me, but forbid them ; for such have nothing to do with the kingdom of God.”

(4.) Finally, when they challenge us to point to an express example of infant baptism in the New Testament, we may, with equal fairness, challenge them to point to a single instance of a son or daughter of a baptized Christian being baptized by the apostles after coming to the years of discretion. There was sufficient time, during the ministry of the apostles and the period which the sacred canon embraces, for the children of baptized parents to have reached maturity. The history of the Acts of the Apostles embraces a period of more than thirty years, and John wrote long after. During that time thousands had been born of Christian parents, and had grown up to the age of twenty or thirty years ; and yet there is not one instance in the New Testament of any such baptisms in adult years. This is surely a strong presumptive proof that they were baptized in childhood ; for if not, there is no account of any, *no, not one*, of the posterity of Christian parents being baptized at all ; for all the accounts of adult-baptisms are only of such as were converted to the Christian religion, having been previously either Jews or Heathens. Had there been even one solitary instance of this, it would have served to show that it was the practice of the apostles to delay, as our Baptist friends do, the baptism of children of Christian parents till they come to years of maturity. What is more, we might certainly have expected, had this been the practice, to have found some notice of it in the epistles addressed to the Churches. Some word would surely have dropped—some passing hint—some

exhortation to the offspring of Christian parents, to prepare themselves for this ordinance, and to come forward and make a profession of Christ in baptism. Nothing of the kind, however, occurs. The apostles address them all as saints and holy brethren—taking for granted that all, old and young, are baptized disciples of Christ, and exhorting parents to bring up their children, and children to obey their parents in the Lord. In short, they address them just as we would address our Churches, viewing them as so many families, in which there were members of all ages, fathers and mothers, young men and women, and little children. *There is not a single instance of baptism, as now practised by the Baptists, in the whole of the New Testament.*

In concluding this part of our subject I may be permitted to address a few words, in the form of practical appeal, first to the office-bearers of the Church who have admitted children by baptism, and next to Christian parents.

1. By the admission of children, the Church on earth is assimilated, not only to all natural communities, such as families and nations, but to “the Church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven;” which none will deny is composed of children as well as adults. But we fear that we come far short of fully realizing and faithfully acting upon the relation which has been thus solemnly constituted. Time was when the Church of Scotland showed a laudable zeal for the “godly upbringing” of her youth; not merely by urging a legal provision for the sustentation of schools, in which the elements of learning might be taught, so that all might

read the Scriptures, and that a race of youths might be prepared for the work of the ministry; but by making ecclesiastical provision for their being instructed in the principles of our holy religion, under the superintendence of pastors and parents. The child was recognised as a member of the Church by being placed under discipline, and trained up under her eye in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The Church, however, is chargeable with having in a great measure practically neglected this duty; and her neglect has furnished those who forbid the admission of children into the Church with a too plausible plea against the practice. You say that they are members of the Church, they will urge, but you do not treat them as if they were such! Let us, who are "put in trust" with this ministry, see that we do not give occasion to this taunt. Let us not shift off the burden by leaving it to the "domestic constitution" of the family. But let us endeavour to convert the Church into a blessed family, in which the children shall be trained for God, under the solemn sanction of ecclesiastical discipline.

2. Let me appeal to parents. "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." And ye Christian mothers, to whom the Church must look as most nearly concerned in this general exhortation to parents, to you would we specially appeal.

Is nothing more required from woman, and especially from the Christian mother, than to minister, like the beasts that perish, to the bodily sustenance of her child? Was that holy affection so deeply implanted in her nature merely to run waste in idle dalliance or selfish indulgence? No. Christianity avails itself of this,

as of every other principle of our nature, and turns it to practical account. Christ meets the mother at the very threshold of maternal life, and finding the child in her arms, says to her, as Pharaoh's daughter to the mother of Moses, "Take this child, and nurse it for me."

The influence of a mother over the future character and destiny of her child, whether for good or evil, is incalculable. She has the moulding of its moral frame almost as much under her control as the management of its body ; and, during the tender years of childhood, the one is almost as yielding and plastic as the other. In both mind and body there may be tendencies which she cannot wholly eradicate or subdue ; but she can use means and follow a system which will go far to correct deficiency, to foster excellence, and to modify excess. The maxim is old as the world, that "as the twig is bent, the tree is inclined." And who can foretell how much of the future welfare or woe of the man depends on the manner in which that influence is employed ? Who can say how soon the tendrils of the heart may be taught to bend in the right direction, under the tender hand of maternal discipline ? None knows better than the mother herself how soon her beloved babe begins to know her, to guess her meaning, and to yield to her wishes. How soon does it become sensible of kind or unkind treatment—conscious of a smile or a frown—susceptible of joy and grief, love and hatred ! How soon, especially, do the evil passions begin to betray themselves—infant pride, infant anger, and even infant revenge ! And how soon do these emotions, if not repressed in time, acquire the strength of habits ! It may be affirmed, without the least extravagance, that the

child is capable of moral restraint and training as soon as it is born. It is capable of knowing what is done *to* it, long before it can know what is done *for* it—capable of good or evil impressions, long before it is capable of doing good or evil actions.

Now, for the right and faithful discharge of this duty, the gospel holds the mother responsible. It converts her matronly cares into Christian duties, and consecrates her to the office of the maternal ministry over her infant offspring. The Church, at this early age of their membership, can only devolve them into her hands, binding her by a solemn vow to the righteous fulfilment of her duties. Even the father must leave the charge greatly in the hands of the mother, chiefly taking heed lest he frustrate her endeavours by injudicious interference. Hers, properly, is the task to “train up her child in the way in which it ought to go.” And how powerful are the motives presented to her! “Doth not even nature itself teach” her, that it is her duty to advance the best interests of the being whom she has brought into the world, who is part of herself, and who draws his subsistence from her own bosom? And what says the gospel? Does it not teach her to regard that being as an immortal creature, destined to eternal weal or woe, inheriting through her the curse and corruption of a fallen nature, and liable, as such, to misery and death? And does it not teach her that the only way of recovery by which that dear child can escape from everlasting ruin, and rise to everlasting happiness, is by the baptism of Christ’s blood, by being “washed, and sanctified, and justified in the name of our Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God?” How intensely anxious must she be, if she possess the heart of a Christian parent, to

compensate, as far as lies in her power, for having brought an immortal being into such fearfully precarious circumstances! How gladly avail herself of every means of grace which God, in his wisdom, has provided; and more especially of baptism, in which “the blood of sprinkling” is sacramentally exhibited, and in which she is invited to dedicate her offspring to the Saviour, obtaining for it the seal of that gracious covenant which provides a remedy for all the evils that have flowed from the penal covenant of works! She will not hesitate in this to follow the example of the Virgin Mary, in her care about the infant Jesus when she “brought him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.”

Thus it appears, that our doctrine on this subject is as accordant with the dictates of nature as it is with the doctrine of inspiration, and, we may add, with the improvements of the age. Infant baptism points to infant training—to infant schools. It responds to the best and strongest affections in the heart of man—love to his offspring. It stamps the child as an immortal being, capable of regenerating grace and of eternal glory. Baptism, indeed, does not of itself, as administered to the infant any more than to the adult, confer that grace or secure that glory; but to believing parents it is the type of the one and the earnest of the other. To them, when meditating on the sad truth that their child was “shapen in iniquity,” it is no small consolation to know that grace has been provided for its recovery; and, in the event of its being torn from their arms by the hand of death, to think that it had been sacramentally delivered into the arms of that loving Redeemer who said, “Of such is the kingdom of heaven.” To them it must be gratifying in the highest degree to

know, that as "circumcision was not of Moses, but of the fathers," as it was not a ceremonial but a patriarchal institute, belonging to that covenant which was made with faithful Abraham, and "which the law could not disannul, so as to render the promise of none effect;" so baptism, which is a seal of the same covenant, assures the Christian believer that "the promise is to him and to his children." And then, what a blessed thought is it to the Christian mother, that "the child whom God hath given her," or whom it may have pleased him to take away, was actually and truly a "disciple of the Lord," having not only been dedicated to him in his own ordinance, and enrolled in his school; but that her little one has, in fact, received lessons in that school, having from his birth been "brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?" Would she deny her poor child the privilege which he cannot plead for himself, but which Christ pleads in his behalf, saying: "Suffer thy little child to come unto me, and forbid him not?" Would she shrink from erasing his name from her own testament, and yet blot it out of Christ's testament? No; the mother's heart is not made of such stern stuff. The theory of infant-repudiation is as unnatural as it is unevangelical. It would shut out the mother from all those hopes and consolations of which Christian baptism is the proper pledge, forbidding her to bring her babe as a disciple to Christ, and coldly telling her to wait till some indefinite period, when it may please the Church to pronounce it an adult! Good people may try to get over this natural feeling, and endeavour to compensate for the absence of the holy rite, by a more than ordinary attention to the child whom the Church refuses to recognise as a member; but na-

ture has sometimes taken her revenge on those who, by adopting this principle, have sinned against her laws, and those of heaven.*

Let Christian parents, who are admitted to the privilege of baptism for their children, lay this matter seriously to heart. Let them remember that Christian privileges involve corresponding obligations and responsibilities. "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord; and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are the children of the youth." Let them remember that the morals of the child as well as its mind, depend greatly on them for their formation; that its soul as well as its body has been intrusted to their keeping; and that for its future destiny they must be held, in a great measure, responsible to God. Baptism is the sacred link of that responsibility; while to the child himself it stands as the perpetual memento of his "engagement to be the Lord's," and renders him also responsible for the manner in which he fulfils it. The duties of the bond may be neglected; but the link can never be broken, and eternity alone shall witness the momentous results of Christian baptism.

* The allusion here is to an interesting fact in the history of the Baptists of Jamaica, whose converts brought their children to be baptized, and thus acknowledged as "the lambs of the flock." The pastors, after an ineffectual resistance, compromised the matter, by proposing to lay their hands on them and bless them.

LECTURE V.

THE EFFICACY AND BENEFIT OF BAPTISM.

HAVING considered some of the most common objections to the admission of children, we have passed the most complicated and disagreeable part of the subject, and now come to a much more important and edifying, as well as pleasing view of the question,—viz., the efficacy and benefit of baptism; although here also (such is the sad condition annexed to all our religious discussions in this imperfect state of things) we may have occasion to tread on disputed ground.

1. We may begin by remarking, that *the efficacy of baptism does not depend on any virtue in the mere symbol*. Baptism is a mere symbol of spiritual good, not the spiritual good itself. Inattention to this distinction, trite and palpable as it is, lies at the root of all the error and misapprehension which so widely prevails on this subject. So strongly are men inclined, in the matters of the unseen world, to rest upon the tangibilities and visibilities of the world around them, that it is with the utmost difficulty they can be kept from confounding the form with the essence of religion. With many therefore, in all denominations of Christians, the mere outward sign, provided it is dispensed in the way they deem agreeable to the will of God, is inseparably identified with the thing signified—not by its leading them, in the exercise of faith, to the promised blessing, but by its

being substituted in the place of that blessing. Thus in the Church of Rome baptism is put in the room of regeneration ; and in the controversy now raging in the Church of England on baptismal regeneration, this is precisely the point which divides the Evangelical from the Anglo-romanist party. We shall not here enter into the question, which of these parties hold sentiments most in accordance with the standards of their Church ; but certain it is, that, in point of practice, the idea held by the High Church party, that baptism administered by an ordained priest is just regeneration, lies at the root of all the corruptions of that Church. It is on this ground that the person, on arriving at the years of discretion, is confirmed and admitted to the Lord's Supper ; it is on this ground that when he dies, whatever may have been his character during life, he is committed to the dust as "a dear brother," "in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life."

We are in danger, however, of falling into the same error, by going to the opposite extreme of those who insist on regeneration and baptism always going together, not indeed as cause and effect, but the former as an indispensable qualification for the reception of the latter. The danger here lies, not in the mere practice of baptizing adults, but in the language and arguments which they are induced to employ in opposition to the baptism of children. We need only refer to the confidence with which they speak of always baptizing *believers*, and the perpetual identification of baptism with the new birth, as its invariable accompaniment and attestation. We would seriously guard you against this illusion. Nothing can be plainer from Scripture than that, when the outer baptism of water is referred to, it is identified sole-

ly with outer privilege ; and when a spiritual change is spoken of, it is ascribed to the inner baptism of the Spirit. Thus, the baptism mentioned in Rom. vi. 3, and the parallel passage in Col. ii. 12, unquestionably is the inner baptism ; for it is identified with a spiritual transformation. But the baptism mentioned in Gal. iii. 27, “ As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ,” may be understood either of the outer or the inner baptism. If, however, it is applied to the outer baptism, the “ putting on of Christ” ascribed to it must be some outer work—a mere profession of Christianity—or some external relationship to Christ as members of his visible Church. If, again, the “ putting on of Christ” denotes some inner work—some spiritual transformation—the “ baptizing into Christ” must be the inner baptism of the Spirit. Let this be steadily kept in view ; for if we transpose these things, by identifying in any way the inner work with the outer symbol, we are guilty of perverting the Scripture ; and this is done, whether with the Popish party we place the spiritual grace *after*, or with the Baptist party place it *before*, the mere outward symbol. In both cases there is a confounding of two things, which in Scripture are kept entirely distinct from each other.

2. The efficacy of baptism *is not confined to the mere act of administration*. We have seen that baptism is, in and of itself, not grace, but the mere symbol of grace. This may perhaps be granted by our opponents, who may yet plead that God has so inseparably linked the sacred sign with the spiritual blessing, that in all cases where it is rightly administered the blessing will follow ; or at least that it becomes us to believe, in the judgment of charity, that it will follow or has preceded.

It might easily be shown that this really amounts to an identifying or confounding of the sign with the thing signified ; for if baptism, when rightly observed, is invariably accompanied by regeneration and spiritual benefits, then to be baptized is to be regenerated, and it must be unbelief to hold the contrary. It is in vain to say that it is the Spirit of God who, by and through baptism, regenerates the soul ; for, besides that this is taking for granted what cannot be proved from Scripture, and besides its being wholly opposed to the Scriptural doctrine of regeneration, it is inconsistent with the office of the Spirit as a free agent, and virtually ascribes to man and to the act of man what is due only to God. The Spirit *may* no doubt bless any ordinance for salvation ; but, according to this theory, he not only *may* but he *must* bless this ordinance, and bless it in the very act of its administration. The moment that grace is made to hang on the performance of a ceremony or the pronouncing of a certain form of words, that moment its nature is changed, and we ascribe to the sign what is due only to the divine agent. It is a reversal of the divine order ; the Spirit in this case depends on the sign, instead of the sign depending on the Spirit. The priest is converted into a sort of spiritual Prometheus, who, at his own pleasure, can call down fire from heaven to animate the dead clay of fallen nature ; and God becomes subsidiary and subservient to man. The very idea is tainted with blasphemy. No ; the Spirit of God is a free Spirit ; he giveth to every man severally as He willeth ; and He is not tied down to any institution, much less to an institution which, as it is only administered once to the same person, would infer that He was limited to the very moment of its administration.

3. The efficacy of baptism *does not depend on any virtue residing in the person who administers it.* Our opponents here are those who plead for apostolical succession; who maintain that those who have succeeded to the apostles in the line of episcopal ordination, possess, in virtue of their office, not only the sole right to administer the ordinance, but some kind of quality by which the ordinance, when dispensed by him, is valid and efficacious for spiritual purposes. We grant that, according to the order of Christ's house, the minister is to be distinguished from the people, and that to him it properly belongs, in virtue of his office, to administer the seals of the covenant. But there is not the slightest ground in Scripture for the dogma, that he inherits by office any spiritual virtue which he can communicate to the ordinances he dispenses. The apostles themselves disclaimed any such thing. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." And in regard to baptism, he says to the same Church, "Were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you but Crispus and Gaius, lest any should say that I baptized in mine own name." Taking which two passages together, it appears that whatever importance may be attached to the person baptizing in regard to ecclesiastical order, which is an inferior consideration, in regard to spiritual increase it is a matter of no importance whatever; the person may be something in the one point of view—in the other he is nothing.

4. The efficacy of baptism *does not depend on the faith*

of the parents. It was an early opinion held by Augustine and others of the fathers, that children are regenerated by the faith of their parents; and that, if taken away in infancy, they shall be saved by baptism.* There is no ground whatsoever for such an opinion. The faith of parents, when professed, may form one of the grounds on which children may be admitted by the Church to receive baptism; but it cannot form any link of connection between baptism and the blessings which it represents. No man can believe for another, or stand proxy for him before God. There is but one Surety for the sinner, and if we do not stand in Him, none can stand for us. It is even a mistaken view of the matter to suppose, as many do, that the parent takes on the vow in baptism in the name of the child. He vows for himself only, and vows as a parent already in covenant with God, and not in the supposititious character of a catechumen or new convert pledging himself for the first time to lead a Christian life. The practice of admitting godfathers and godmothers, as they are called—though it may have been intended for a good purpose at first, and though it may be pleaded for as a token of the spiritual relationship established between the child and the church—is the native fruit of the vicarious principle erroneously supposed to be implied in baptism. In truth, no proxy is either admissible or necessary; the child is admitted for himself, in virtue of his relation to the Church; and the parent, as the natural guide and guardian of the child, is held bound by the Church to bring him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. I shall only add—

5. That the efficacy of baptism *does not depend on its*

* Augustin. Op., vol. i. Epist. 98, 193.

being improved at the time of its administration. From the way in which some talk of baptism, they would seem to regard it as some critical process or grand spiritual feat, the whole value and effect of which depends on the style in which it is performed at the time of its celebration. They conceive of it as the stamping of the person with an indelible mark, which admits of no subsequent improvement—the whole effect having been realized already. Now let it be observed, that baptism is unlike all the other institutions of Christ in this respect, that it admits only of being *once* dispensed to the person; and, viewed as the symbol of regeneration, we can perceive the beauty and propriety of this. But then, all the more on this account, we require to guard against attaching to it any thing like a superstitious virtue, and to remember that, like all the other means of grace, it must be improved by faith and prayer. And all the more for this reason, must we see the absurdity of limiting the use of baptism to the time of administration. If we had been required, like the Jews, to practise “divers baptisms,” as they were in the habit of baptizing themselves every day by washing their hands before meals—then, along with every act of baptism, there might have been another opportunity for an act of faith, as there is in the frequent observance of the Lord’s Supper, whereby a man may repent and make up, as it were, for his unworthy observance at one time, by a worthier reception of it at another time. But were the benefit of baptism confined to the moment of administration, there would be no such opportunity granted of repairing the injury sustained by an unbelieving reception of the ordinance. It is apparent from this alone, that it never could have been intended by a gracious

God, that the efficacy of our baptism should depend on the manner or spirit in which it is first received—on the amount of knowledge or faith which we possessed at that period—or on any of the circumstances under which it is administered. The spirit of the gospel, as a doctrine of freedom, of intelligence, and of faith, emancipates us from all such superstitious conceits; and taking for granted the fact that we have been baptized, it calls upon us to realize the blessedness, and follow up the design of the ordinance.

Having thus cleared our way by showing in what the connection between baptism and the blessing does *not* consist—having shown that it does not depend on the mere rite or the outward dispensation, nor on any virtue in the person of the administrator, nor on the faith of the parents, nor even on its being improved by the person himself at the time of baptism—let us now consider in what the connection really consists.

1. And here let us first observe that there is a *sacramental* connection between baptism and the blessings of salvation. “The like *figure* whereunto, even baptism, doth now save us; not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God.” Baptism then, like the ark of Noah, is a figure of salvation. It is the sacred emblem—the sacramental type and exhibition of regeneration—of pardon, of adoption into God’s family, and admission into the inheritance of the Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven.

In the sacraments of the New Testament, God has been pleased to represent spiritual blessings to us by means of visible and material symbols. Simple as these are, still they are *God’s signs*, and as such they must be

infinitely valuable, and well fitted to accomplish their ends. The object of these sacraments is not to confer grace, but to confirm it—not to create what had no existence before, but to assure us in the possession of what God has been pleased to bestow. Regeneration and the remission of sins being blessings which God has bestowed on his people, he is pleased to grant them baptism as a pledge and confirmation of the covenant in which they are conveyed to them. And accordingly, in the outward form of administration, there is an emblem of the washing of regeneration. The person is, as it were, visibly regenerated—visibly washed and sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus.

This being the case, it was extremely natural that the fathers of the Church in early times, and even some of our reformers, who spoke with much simplicity, and at the same time much fervour, should sometimes employ expressions about baptism, which to us, who have been involved in controversy on the subject, may appear very vague and injudicious. Expressions on many other subjects not then in dispute, they were in the habit of employing in a perfectly scriptural sense, which we now find necessary to qualify, in consequence of the abuse that has been made of them. Thus they would speak of the child being regenerated in baptism, when all they meant was, that it was sacramentally regenerated, or that it had received the sacrament and sign of regeneration. I perceive in a late publication on baptism, from the pen of a dignitary of the Church of England, that advantage has been taken of the strong language of Luther on this point, and an attempt been made to show that he held the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. And it is quite true, that in one part of his writings he

lays down this position very broadly, that "a man from the time of his baptism is without sin, and quite innocent." This sentence the author referred to quotes and glories in, as entirely in his favour; but had he turned to the following page, he would have found an explanation of the language. "Man," says the reformer, "is *sacramentally* free from sin and innocent; that is, he has the divine sign, which signifies that all his sins ought to die. *So far as the sacrament is concerned* (he adds), it is true that we are without sin; but baptism is not yet perfect, and we are still in the flesh and full of sin." Again he adds, "When the person grows up, the sinful nature develops itself; which would not be the case if sins were dead and buried in baptism. But in baptism, the mortification of sin is only *signified*." And this he labours to prove at great length.*

2. But, *secondly*, besides this sacramental connection, *there is a gracious and spiritual connection between baptism and spiritual blessings*. God has established a real though spiritual link between the symbol and the substance, the sign and the signification. It is of importance to mark this more particularly than we have yet done. Let it be remembered, then, that there are two ways in which baptism confers benefits on men; it does so by confirming the *promise* of the covenant, and it does so by exhibiting the *grace* of the covenant. Viewed in the first light, it does not operate on the individual directly, but only indirectly and prospectively. As a seal, it is directly related to the covenant, and looks forward to the future history of the individual, proceeding on the assumption that his faith will be exercised on the

* See NOTE D.—*Archdeacon Wilberforce's Misrepresentation of Luther's Sentiments on Baptism.*

promise which has been confirmed unto him. Viewed in the second light, as a sign, it is meant to operate directly on the individual, and to operate on him morally and spiritually. This holds true of baptism at whatever age it is dispensed. Even to the adult who may be supposed to have faith, this particular ordinance, viewed as a seal, only communicates privilege, conveys a right, confirms a deed. It has a prospective reference, therefore, to future improvement. The act of baptism is over in a moment, but the seal remains in our possession for life, and "standeth ever sure." It is not necessary for this purpose that it should be a visible seal in the flesh; it is enough, and more accordant with the spirituality of the gospel, that it should stand in the recorded fact of our baptism, attested by the Church, and engraven on the "tables of the heart." This is sufficient, both for ministerial appeal and for personal improvement. Viewed again as a symbol, baptism operates directly on the man as a moral means, when it is improved by faith for the spiritual ends which it is designed to serve.

But the grand question with many is, Of what benefit can baptism be to the child, who is incapable of exercising faith?

In regard to children, then, though they are brought into the enjoyment of privilege, we do not think that baptism, as a sign, can have any direct spiritual operation on them until they are capable of improving it. If we be asked, Why then not delay the administration of the ordinance till they are capable of improving it? we answer, That the right of the child to baptism does not depend on his present ability to improve it, but on other grounds which we have already stated from Scripture, and which, being found there, preclude all arguing

on the question of capacity. We answer further, that we know not how soon the child may be able to understand the meaning of the symbol ; and we have no reason for delaying the dispensation of what the child has a right to, merely because we think it can be of no service to him. But we answer still further, that though the spiritual efficacy of baptism as a symbol cannot be properly realized till the child is able to improve it spiritually, still it does not follow that baptism is, in the mean time, of no service to the child. On the contrary, he is brought into a state of outward privilege, and, in virtue of God's promise in the covenant of grace, sealed in baptism ; if he be a child of God, he may vouchsafe him his Holy Spirit to regenerate his nature, and absolve him from guilt and condemnation. And thus, *as a seal of the covenant*, the child may be benefited by baptism, just as the charter made out in favour of the child in infancy is of great service to him, and confers on him many advantages during his minority, before he comes to age so as to avail himself of its provisions. So we may say of baptism, which, as a seal, confirms to the children of God the gift of the heavenly inheritance.* All we mean to say is, that baptism does not, of itself, work regeneration on any ; and that the spiritual operation of it, *as a symbol of spiritual blessings*, can only be realized in the way of improving it.

The distinction we have now repeated between baptism, as a seal of the covenant, and as a symbol of the grace of the covenant, seems to place the matter in a clear

* Philip Henry, the pious nonconformist, used to compare baptism to "the taking of a beneficial lease for a child while in the cradle, and putting his life into it."—*Life of Philip Henry*, by Sir J. Bickerton Williams, p. 85.

light, and to meet all the apparent difficulties of the case. A seal may be of service to the unconscious babe; a symbol can be of no efficacy to him, until he is capable of understanding what the symbol means. Circumcision was of great service to the Jewish child in infancy, as a seal of God's covenant with Israel; but as a symbol of spiritual blessings, it could only be of service to him when he came to be able to understand it. In like manner, though baptism admits the child into a state of privilege, in consequence of which he may be spiritually benefited, we do not think that, in and of itself, as a mere symbol, it can operate on the unconscious child any spiritual benefit, until its spiritual meaning has been realized by faith. But the same is true of the Word of God. Who will say that the Christian child is not the better of the Word of God? Does it not bring him into a state of society, of privilege and advantage, both temporal and spiritual, infinitely superior to that of the heathen child, living and dying in darkness? And yet this blessed Word does not *operate* upon this child as a means of salvation, until he has become capable of apprehending and appreciating its contents.

But, in the mean time, is baptism nothing to the child? What advantage hath the Christian? and what profit is there of baptism? Much every way. Is it no benefit to the child that he has been brought externally into covenant with God? included, in respect of Church membership, as a "fellow-citizen with the saints in the household of God?" Is it no advantage that he has received a sacred, a divine pledge, which he is permitted, as soon as he "comes to years" (and who will venture to limit these years?) to plead in his own be-

half? Is it no privilege to be dedicated to God? Is it nothing to be able in after life to reflect on this early dedication? Is it nothing to have been recognized by God's Church, and to have been committed by her to the care of our parents, under a solemn promise that they shall bring us up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?

Only one remark further would we now suggest. All saving ordinances are intended mainly for "the heirs of salvation." Others share in them only externally and incidentally. We must conceive of them as *instituted* for the benefit of "the nations of them that are saved." To them they are pledges of a Father's grace, and earnest of heaven's glory. God marks them out as his own in baptism. Like Paul, they are "separated from their mother's womb" before they are "called by his grace."—(Gal. i. 15.)

And there is this difference between the blessings bestowed by God on his children in infant years, and those vouchsafed them in maturity, that the infant blessing is not bestowed in virtue of baptism. God does not bless infants *because they are baptized*; but they are baptized *because he is pleased to bless them*. It was because Christ took up infants in his arms and blessed them, that we consider they have a right to baptism. But it is otherwise in regard to the efficacy of baptism to God's children in riper years. They are then blessed with spiritual blessings in virtue of their baptism; and they reap the benefit *because* they were baptized. And thus you may perceive what we mean by the efficacy of baptism, as such, being realized by its improvement. What benefits God may confer on his elect infants, it is difficult to tell. The subject is mysterious, and we are not

called to judge on it. But of this we may be sure, that these benefits do not flow from any occult virtue in their baptism. It flows from the covenant of grace, of which baptism is merely the seal and confirmation. But we can all understand how baptism operates upon us in our riper years; and this can only be in the way of a personal improvement of it.

3. Dismissing this part of the subject, which some would seem to regard as the all-in-all of the question, we come to another view of it, which we consider of infinitely greater moment, and remark that *the benefit of baptism properly begins in regeneration, and extends to the whole life, and even to the eternity, of the believer.* There is, as we have had frequent occasion to observe, an inner as well as an outer baptism—a baptism with the Spirit as well as a baptism with water. This spiritual baptism, symbolized by the outward rite, is begun in the day of regeneration. The child of God does not receive the proper signification of baptism till he is born again. He is not, indeed, *truly or fully baptized*, in the spiritual sense of the word, till then; for he who has merely received water-baptism may be said to have been only half baptized. In regard to this grand essential change, it matters not at what time or age the outer baptism may have been applied. The baptized adult may be as far distant from the day of his spiritual birth as the baptized infant. But until he has been born again, his is not a perfected baptism. He has but “the shadow of good things to come, not the very image or substance of the things.” He may boast as he pleases, but he has got nothing more than the emblem of the new birth. He is not baptized, in the properest and highest sense of that term, till he has undergone “the washing of regen-

eration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." And here we cannot help repeating, that the system which keeps this out of view, by pleading for it as *essential to baptism* that the question of regeneration shall be settled and decided before the administration of the ordinance, is fraught with the most dangerous tendency, and calculated to foster the most fatal delusion.

But this is not all. The benefit of baptism, though it begins in regeneration, does not end there. It extends over the whole history of the believer. He is not baptized wholly until he has been "sanctified wholly," and until every vestige of corruption, every stain of sin being washed away, "his whole spirit and soul and body are preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." The Christian, therefore, may realize the benefit of his baptism every day of his life. It binds him to die daily unto sin, and live daily unto righteousness. In every step of his onward progress in holiness he is baptized; nor shall it be till the morning of the resurrection, when "this corruption shall put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality," that he shall have fairly completed his baptism. Then, and not till then, shall he know its full signification, when he shall have "washed his robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," and by this perfect baptism been consecrated by Christ as a king and priest unto God and his Father.*

4. We remark, therefore, lastly, that *the benefit of our own baptism is realized in its spiritual and believing improvement*. When we speak of *our own* baptism, this implies we are adults, and capable of improving it. How, then, it may be asked, are we called to improve *our own baptism*?

* See Appendix, Note F—*Bunyan and his Baptism*.

(1.) Our own baptism may be improved for obtaining the pardon of sins and peace with God. When assailed with guilty fear, trembling at the thought of God being angry with us, we should, as Luther says, “flee to baptism as our asylum.” In the covenant of grace God promises pardon, and in baptism God gave us a personal pledge in addition to the promise. If we are warranted to plead the promise, we are surely entitled to plead the pledge also. And who will say that GOD’S PLEDGE is nothing? Is it nothing that, besides his general word of promise, offered to all, Christ came down and gave this TO ME, as a personal and peculiar seal? Is it nothing that the emblem of the atoning blood has been applied to me as an individual by God’s own appointment? Is it nothing to the terrified convict, looking only for immediate execution, to see the royal seal on the gracious letter of reprieve? Is it nothing to the soul, ready to sink into the waters of the angry deluge, to see the ark of baptism ready to save him from deadly immersion? “Yes,” the believer will say, “I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for [by this sign, as well as by his word] he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints [his consecrated ones]: but let them not turn again to folly.”—(Ps. lxxxv. 8).

(2.) Our own baptism ought to be improved for our sanctification. In this ordinance we may be said to have been sacramentally regenerated. We should count ourselves as dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto righteousness through Jesus Christ. The full efficacy of baptism, we have seen, is not realized till the body of sin has been destroyed, and our mortal bodies shall be raised up in incorruption. What an argument, then, does our baptism afford to enforce the cultivation of true holiness!

Are we not "baptized into the death of Christ, that, like as Christ rose from the dead, even so we also should walk in newness of life?" Is there not an utter and unreconcilable contrariety between baptism and sin? The whole life of the baptized profligate must be a perpetual contradiction—a practical lie. Only place the two things together, and conceive of a man baptized "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," and yet, under that holy and reverend name, living in uncleanness, lasciviousness, lusts, falsehood, maliciousness, and all wickedness! The holy ordinance frowns upon such a man, at whatever time he may date his baptism; and like the pillar of cloud and flame, the ancient type of the Divine Presence, it is all darkness to him, while it is all light to the true Israel. On the other hand, how emphatically does baptism remind the Christian that he has been "washed," and therefore ought to "keep himself unspotted from the world!" that he has been dedicated to God, and therefore bound to "glorify God in his body and spirit, which are His!" "Preserve my soul," saith the Psalmist, "for I am holy;"—I am a consecrated person, in covenant with thee: preserve in purity and safety what thou hast sealed as thine own!

(3.) Our baptism should be improved for the faithful discharge of the engagements under which it has brought us. It is one of Christ's "cords of love" by which he binds us to himself. The nature of these engagements we may afterwards consider.

From this part of our subject then let us learn, *first*, the necessity of faith, in order to a right appreciation of the nature, uses, and benefits of Christian baptism. All

the ordinances of the gospel indeed require to be viewed with the eye of faith, otherwise they will appear only in the light of stumbling-blocks and foolishness. The wisdom that really characterises them is not "the wisdom of this world." The world can understand what is meant by baptismal regeneration. The doctrine is indeed supremely absurd, but the absurdity is palpable and transparent. Its advocates mean to say, that every child they baptize is regenerated by the water. This is very plain, were it only possible; and it would be very pleasant, were it only credible. It evades all the difficulties of the subject, and requires no nice distinctions. And, in like manner, the world can understand baptism when held forth as a sort of dramatic exhibition, representing a burial, or some change which the person professes he has undergone. In this case also there is no demand made upon faith. Viewed with the eye of sense, it seems all very plain. But the moment you enter the domain of faith—when invited to hear God speaking and not man—to look beyond the symbol to the promise—the scene changes. To appreciate the wisdom and grace of these spiritual appointments, we require another Spirit than that of the world. "They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge."—(Prov. viii. 9.)

Let us learn, *secondly*, the necessity of faith in order to a due improvement of our baptism. The opponents of infant baptism insist very much on the necessity of faith, and loudly boast of theirs only being "believer's baptism." But it turns out that they contend for faith only as a condition for the reception of the outward sign. We also plead for the necessity of faith, not as the condition of receiving, but as the condition of being bene-

fited by it when received. The child may receive it, *as a seal*, previous to faith; but even in so receiving it, the understanding is, that its spiritual efficacy can only be realized by faith. So that ours is "believer's baptism" as much as theirs; and, we venture to say, more worthy than theirs of that designation. For, instead of isolating the ordinance, and dwelling, as they are led to do from opposition to our practice, on the simple observance of the rite, we spread it over the whole life of the man, and insist on the benefit to be derived from the habitual improvement of it by the believer.

I cannot close without adverting to the interesting fact, that many of the best and holiest of men have regarded the matter in this light, and have recorded in their private diaries the benefit they received from this believing use of their baptism. I shall only quote the experience of the pious Matthew Henry, whom few will pretend to exceed in spirituality of mind, or in sound thinking. He says:—"I cannot but take occasion to express my gratitude to God for my infant baptism; not only as it was an early admission into the visible body of Christ, but as it furnished my pious parents with a good argument (and I trust, through grace, a prevailing argument) for an early dedication of my ownself to God in my childhood. IF GOD HAS WROUGHT ANY GOOD WORK UPON MY SOUL, I DESIRE, WITH HUMBLE THANKFULNESS, TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE MORAL INFLUENCE OF MY INFANT BAPTISM UPON IT."*

* Henry's Treatise on Baptism.

LECTURE VI.

ON THE BAPTISMAL ENGAGEMENT.

AT an early stage of this course of lectures, we adverted to a curious characteristic peculiar to Baptist controversialists,—a strong invincible propensity to identify the mode of baptism with its proper subjects. In their minds, the idea of immersion is inseparably associated with adult baptism; so much so, that they cannot conceive of any adopting the one practice without adopting the other. It is certain, that in point of fact there is no connection in nature or Scripture between the two things. We might adopt the practice of immersion to-morrow, and still continue to baptize children. The Church of England, as we may see from her formularies, began by immersing infants, though this was given up on its being found to be incompatible in our climate with the safety of the child. But, in the mind of a Baptist, the two ideas appear to be inseparable; and we accounted for this, partly from the idea, founded on a mistaken interpretation of one passage in Scripture, that the person must be active in baptizing himself by going down to, and coming up from, the water; and partly from the undue weight which Baptists lay on the efficacy of baptism at the time of its performance. The question with them is not, How are you improving your

baptism? but, Have you been rightly baptized? Now we will not yield to any of them in an earnest desire that every ordinance of Christ should be administered according to his own prescription; but we maintain that it is quite at variance with the spiritual, rational, and benevolent character of the gospel, to hold that the validity of any of its services depends on the mere outward mode of its administration. Ordination of ministers may not be gone about exactly as we think it should, according to apostolic law; church government may not be conducted according to our ideas of the inspired pattern; the Lord's Supper may not be observed as we believe it has been "received of the Lord;" but shall we say of the churches which differ from ours in these points, that they have therefore no Christian ministry, no church government, and no Lord's Supper? None but Romanists, or Romanizing Churchmen, will hold such a childish and preposterous opinion. In like manner, it is absurd to hold that the validity of baptism depends on the mode of its administration; and there must be something radically wrong in the Baptist theory, when it leads its votaries to insist so much on the mere mode in which, or even the mere age at which, the ordinance is administered. They would do well to remember that there are others who can play at the same weapons; and that, while they plead that the efficacy of baptism depends on the quantity of water employed, or on the quantity of knowledge possessed by the person baptized, there are others who plead that it depends on the quality of the person baptizing, and that there can be no baptism at all unless it is performed by one in priest's orders. The grand error, in both cases, lies in supposing that the efficacy of the ordinance is restricted

to the time of its celebration ; whereas, we think, it admits of being clearly shown that its efficacy, in whatever form, or at whatever age it is administered, extends over the whole lifetime of the baptized, and depends, under the blessing of Christ, on the improvement which is made of it in the subsequent history of the individual. Like Jacob's pillar, it is a standing monument of God's faithfulness and goodness, by looking on which, after a long lapse of years, we may be reminded of our engagements, and urged forward in the Christian course.

Our last lecture, therefore, treated of the efficacy and benefit of baptism ; in concluding which, we were led to show that the chief benefit of baptism, viewed as a moral institute, consists in the due improvement of it for pardon and peace, for sanctification, and for the faithful discharge of its sacred engagements.

We now proceed to the last part of our subject, to explain the obligations or engagements of baptism. Our Catechism teaches, that " baptism is a sacrament, wherein the washing with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, doth signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, *and our engagement to be the Lord's.*" It is the last signification, or rather inference, of baptism that we now take up. And it divides itself into two parts,—the engagement which devolves on the baptized, and the engagement which is come under by the parents in baptism.

I. In considering the baptismal engagement as it affects the persons baptized, we might, in the first place, inquire into the *foundation*, or the proper source, of this engagement to be the Lord's. And here it is needful to bear in mind, that the obligation does not, any

more than the efficacy, flow from the vows of the parents in baptism. We formerly remarked that the efficacy of baptism did not depend on the faith or on the vows of the parent; we now say the same thing of the obligation of baptism. The parent vows for himself, not for the child; he promises in his own name, not in the name of the child. It is as a Christian parent he is allowed to present his child to God in this ordinance; and the duties to which he becomes bound are strictly parental. Nor is it proper to speak of the child himself as vowing at his baptism. We may sometimes speak of our baptismal vows; but it can only be in a figurative and improper sense, for the child is incapable of vowing. On what then, it may be asked, does the engagement or obligation of baptism rest? We may answer in general, that it rests on the simple fact, that the person has been baptized according to Christ's appointment. We do not ask by whose hand the ordinance was dispensed—we do not demand to know how much water was employed, or whether the whole body was covered, or only part in sign of the whole—we do not require to be satisfied as to the age, or knowledge, or faith of the person baptized—nor do we insist on ascertaining that the sign of the cross was duly made on him in token of his being a Christian—all we require to know is the fact, that he has been baptized in the name of the Lord, that he has had the washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; then we say, in virtue of this, he is brought under an engagement to be the Lord's.

If you desire to know more particularly how such an engagement should flow from a person having received the ordinance of Christian baptism in his childhood,

when he could not contract any obligation in his own person, we answer:—

1. It is founded on Christ's own institution. Here we take it for granted, as we have before endeavoured to prove, that the baptism of children is founded on Scripture authority. If so, if it is according to his Word, then it is not *we* that baptize so much as Christ himself. It is as much as if he had said, "Baptize that child in my name." And what does this amount to but a declaration that he is engaged for Christ? "For what if some do not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? God forbid. Yea: let God be true, and every man a liar." In the case of his own people, Christ may be viewed as coming to take infetment of them in their baptism, setting his seal upon them, and commencing that course of gracious dealing with them which will ultimately issue in their salvation. "I passed by thee when thou wast in thy blood, and did cast my skirt over thee, and enter into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine."

2. It is founded on the tenor of the covenant of grace, in virtue of which God claims the children of his people as *his own*, even previous to and independent of baptism. They were *his* in covenant before; and baptism is merely the badge by which the tie is recognised and ratified.

It is true that the children of professing and even believing parents, are not all the spiritual children of God. "They are not all Israel who are of Israel." Those only are the genuine children of God who have been "predestinated to the adoption of sons in Christ Jesus." But baptism has nothing to do with election, any more than circumcision had. Persons are

not baptized because they belong to the elect seed, but because they belong to the covenant of grace—in other words, in virtue of their federal relation to God. It was this that constituted the ancient tie. Abraham as a believer took hold of God's covenant, and as such became entitled to the seal of circumcision, not only for himself, but for his immediate offspring. In like manner, Isaac his son, as a believer, or in the way of taking hold of God's covenant, received the seal of it for his children; and Jacob in the same way, by taking hold of the covenant for himself, secured the seal of it for his children. And thus were they tied to God's covenant as his peculiar people. Even the son of the stranger, who took hold of God's covenant, might in the same way join himself and his family to the Lord. And so in baptism, the professing believer is admitted to take hold of God's covenant for himself and his infant seed, and they are both tied to the covenant. Ishmael on the contrary, by renouncing God's covenant, was cut off from the privilege of the seal for his children; and the whole Jewish nation having broken covenant with God, have forfeited all right to its seal, whether circumcision or baptism. God has said of them, "*Lo-ammi, ye are not my people.*" It thus appears that there is a federal or covenant relation between God and the children of his believing people, in virtue of which they are acknowledged as his—his, we mean, not only in respect of their interest in the blessings of the covenant, but of their connection with its obligations. As his covenant-people they have received a special promise or pledge on the part of God, that he will be their God; and they are under a special obligation to take him in this character, and to serve him as his people. Should it be asked,

Since they are already in covenant with God, where is the need of baptism? we reply, That baptism is God's sign and pledge that they are his; and it is something more than a mere declaration on the part of man or the Church—it is a declaration on the part of God himself, that they are his. God may surely say, I will not only have servants, but I will have my servants to be known. Baptism is God's indenture signed and sealed; it is God's livery put upon his servants, by which they may be known of men, and by which they may themselves be reminded “whose they are and whom they serve.”

3. The engagement in baptism rests on their *dedication*. That parents have a right to dedicate their children to God, may be instructed from various considerations. It is their *duty* to do so, for God has demanded it of them. In token of this God claimed all the first-born sons in Israel. Abraham, the father of the faithful, is commended for it. Now, what is the *duty* it must be the *right* of man to do? Again, it may be argued from the relation between parents and children. Under the law, when a child under age made a rash vow, it was in the power of the parent on hearing it, either to establish or to make it void.—(Numb. xxx.) Even among heathens this law has been acknowledged, as appears from the well-known fact of the Carthaginian general, who took his son Hannibal, when only eight years old, to the altar, and swore him to eternal enmity against the Romans. In the same way, though in a very different spirit, Samuel was devoted by his pious parents to the Lord from the time of his birth, and formally dedicated to his service when a mere child. And in reference to his early dedication, David says,

“O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid [as one who has been born in thy house, and thy property, being the child of one who was thine handmaid]: thou hast loosed my bonds” [given me my liberty, but nevertheless I shall ever hold myself bound to thy service]. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people.”—(Ps. cxvi. 16, 17.)

II. Let us examine the *import* of this engagement.

1. It implies *the answer of a good conscience toward God*. Such is the interpretation of the apostle Peter, “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God.”—(1 Pet. iii. 21.) This has been understood by many interpreters to be an allusion to some ancient practice of requiring catechumens to answer certain questions before baptism; but we pay no regard to any such far-drawn and ingenious expositions. What has the answering of a few questions at the term of baptism to do with “the answer of a good conscience?” I verily believe it has been a device of Satan from the beginning, to prevail on good men to fight about the mere externals of this ordinance, and the circumstantial attending its celebration, in order to keep them from attending to the one thing needful—the practical improvement of the ordinance once administered. What is the whole life of the believer, but the answer of a good conscience toward God? And how can baptism be said to save us, in any sense that can be admitted in this age of rational interpretation, but in the way of producing this responsive

echo of its peace and purity in the conscience of him who has been washed, and sanctified, and justified? As baptism was pardon and peace symbolized, so pardon and peace are baptism realized. The whole spiritual life of the Christian, what is it but an harmonious answer to the engagement contracted in baptism, that we are the Lord's, sanctified wholly in soul, spirit, and body? It is baptism re-echoed and re-enacted, not with water, but with the Holy Ghost. It is baptism speaking out in the life, and answering in the conscience toward God! And would you reject this sublime view of the subject, to fall back upon some peddling criticism about questions said or supposed to have been put to the catechumens before baptism?

2. The engagement in baptism implies a renunciation of Satan and all his works. Baptism is just the gospel in a figure—the symbolized epitome of Christianity. Now, in embracing the gospel, we renounce the service of Satan, the god of this world, who worketh in the children of disobedience. By nature we are the slaves of Satan, the subjects of his kingdom, the children of the devil. By grace we become the children of God, and the subjects of his heavenly kingdom. Baptism is the sign of this transition, and therefore implies an obligation to renounce our allegiance to “the prince of this world.” This obligation comes into force as soon as the child is capable of understanding; and it is of vital importance that he should be taught, as soon as possible, that, though by nature a child of wrath even as others, Christ has put forth a claim upon his service, and that he is bound to renounce the service of sin and Satan.

3. This engagement implies a professed subjection to the Lord Jesus Christ.

In baptism we become bound to a profession of Jesus Christ and his gospel. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ." The allusion here may be to robes of honour and distinction—official vestments, such as royal, judicial, or military robes. Not that we are to imagine there was any thing in the *mode* of baptism resembling the putting on of a garment, any more than resembling a burial, but that every baptized person has assumed the name of Christ; and, if he be spiritually baptized into Christ, he will assume the character of Christ. There is a "naming of the name" of Christ, which every baptized person stands pledged to. He is a Christian in name. Some would make this name synonymous with a believer. But it is descriptive, not of faith, but the profession of faith; not of inward character, but outward privilege.* And, much abused as the term may be by those who assume it without a corresponding character, still we must not allow it to be forgotten, that the designation belongs to all who have been baptized in the name of Christ, in such a way as to bind and oblige them to a holy life. This is the use which the apostle makes of it. "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." You will hear some people say, You cannot be a Christian unless you believe, repent, and be converted. Now, we would rather say, You are already a Christian, and therefore you are bound to believe, and repent, and be converted. It may

* The name of "Christians," now proudly worn by the disciples of Christ as a badge of honour, was originally given them in derision by their enemies as a nickname.—(Acts xi. 26.) In the only other two places in which it occurs (Acts xxvi. 28; 1 Pet. iv. 16), it is obviously used in an invidious sense.

be very flattering to the pride of the heart to say, "I do not choose to become a Christian as yet; I may become one by and by." There is something which sounds to us singularly and disgustingly presumptuous in this language. If you are baptized, Christ says, "I hold you as Christians already, for I baptized you in my name. I have taken infestment of you; you are bound to confess me before men, and submit to my yoke. You are under engagement to be mine in soul, body, and spirit; to yield subjection to all my laws and institutions—to live not unto yourselves, but unto him that died for you and rose again." Nay, more; by your baptism you are bound to acknowledge your engagement to be the Lord's, and to renew it, or rather to confess it, in the most solemn manner at his holy table. Baptism binds us to dedicate ourselves to the Lord, by our own voluntary act, in the Lord's Supper. Those who live in the neglect of this duty are living in the open violation of their baptismal engagements. They are the Lord's; and it becomes them to say so, and to tell the world so, by keeping that feast to which His friends are invited.

3. The baptismal engagement implies a dedication to the blessed Trinity. "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." This implies that the Holy Trinity is a witness to the engagement. "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one."—(1 John v. 7, 8.) "The spirit" may here be very fitly understood to mean the Word of God inspired by the Spirit, through which he still bears witness to Christ; "the water," the rite of baptism, which

bears witness to Christ as a sanctifier ; and “ the blood,” the Lord’s Supper, the commemoration of the shedding of Christ’s blood for the remission of sins, which bears witness to him as a Saviour. In baptism, all the three glorious persons are present to attest the dedication to Christ. And how solemn is that transaction ! We are baptized in His name, in token that we shall accept of the Father as our Father, the Son as our Saviour, the Spirit as our sanctifier. It is a very solemnizing reflection to think, that we have been baptized into this thrice holy name, and that, too, by God’s own injunction ! O what a threefold cord is this, and not easily broken ! All that is venerable in the Father, all that is lovely in the Son, all that is pure in the Spirit, is thus brought to bear on us with the awful pressure of Infinity !

This baptismal engagement may be renewed in early life, and impressed on the mind of the child as soon as he or she is capable of understanding its meaning. Philip Henry, the pious father of the well-known commentator, drew up the following short form of the baptismal covenant for the use of his children :—

“ I take the Lord to be my chiefest good and highest end.

“ I take God the Son to be my Prince and Saviour.

“ I take the Holy Ghost to be my sanctifier, teacher, guide, and comforter.

“ I take the Word of God to be my rule in all my actions ; and the people of God to be my people in all conditions.

“ I do likewise devote and dedicate unto the Lord my whole self, all I am, all I have, and all I can do.

“ And this I do deliberately, sincerely, freely, and for ever.”

This he taught his children, and they, each of them,

solemnly repeated it every Lord's day in the evening, after they were catechised, he putting his Amen to it, and sometimes adding,—“So say, and so do, and ye are made for ever.”

“He also took pains with them to lead them to the understanding of it, and to persuade to a free and cheerful consent to it; and when they grew up he made them all write it over severally with their own hands, and very solemnly set their names to it, which he told them he would keep by him, and it should be produced as a testimony against them, in case they should afterwards depart from God, and turn from following after him.”*

4. We shall only add that the baptismal engagement implies, that defection from Christ, if made by the baptized, amounts to treachery and covenant violation. We grant that the covenant of grace is in itself unchangeable; we grant, too, that those once interested in the blessings of the covenant can never wholly forfeit them or finally fall away. But that there is a sense in which those who are received into the covenant in infancy may be said to break covenant, is clear from the whole history of the Church—from the rejection of Ishmael and his posterity, and of Esau and his posterity—of the ten tribes first, and afterwards of the Jewish nation; as well as from the warnings and exhortations of the Gospel. “Because of unbelief they were broken off—If God spared not the natural branches, take heed that he spare not thee.” Now, in what sense were the Jews “broken off?”—what was the *tie* or *bond*, which, in consequence of their rejection of the Messiah, was snapt asunder, leaving them dissevered from the covenant of God? It could not

* Life and Times of the Rev. Philip Henry, p. 120. London: Thomas Nelson, 1848.

be the tie of spiritual life ; for that, linking them with Him who is “our life” in heaven, could never be broken. Nor could it be the tie of fleshly relationship with Abraham, because that could not be broken off either by any moral cause ; however fallen, they still remained the children of Abraham according to the flesh. It must, then, have been the *federal tie*—and that viewed as binding them externally to the visible Church. This implied many privileges and advantages—much every way ; and this *might* be broken off. Those privileges and advantages implied engagements ; and if the engagements were violated, the covenant was broken, and the relationship ceased. In like manner the covenant of grace, still though in its spiritual administration to believers it is all of grace, and its promises sure to all the spiritual seed, yet in its outward and visible administration implies engagements, corresponding to the privileges which it bestows. Every baptized person is under an engagement to be the Lord’s. This implies he is received into covenant with God ; and if that engagement is broken, it entails upon the person the additional guilt of covenant violation and treachery against his liege Lord. “The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and given to another nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”

III. We come now to say a few words on the parental engagement contracted by those who present their children to God in baptism.

Too little sense, we fear, of the solemn responsibility of parents in baptism prevails among professing Christians. We are so constituted, or rather, have so perverted our constitution, that what is customary, however excellent, is apt to become contemptible ; and the very continued regularity of our privileges, which ought to

the matter of thankfulness, becomes the source of ingratitude and indifference. Thus, in a spiritual sense, "our table becomes a snare before us; and that which should have been for our welfare is become a trap." Yet there can be no doubt that all Christian privilege involves Christian obligation. And as it is one of the highest outward privileges conferred on a member of the Church, that "the promise is to him and to his children," that he is permitted to bring his child to Christ, and there have—not a name given to the child—a paltry object indeed, and unfit to be spoken of in connection with baptism—but to have Christ's name put on the child; so the obligations incurred are proportionally sacred, onerous, and inviolable. "Ye are the children of the promise and of the covenant; therefore God hath sent his Son to bless you" and your children. O how loud the call to duty and to devotion!

1. Let parents consider their responsibility in so far as the child is concerned. They are responsible for its existence in the world, for the curse which it has incurred, and the corruption it has inherited! O what a loud call to improve *every* means of grace that God has provided! How eagerly will the Christian parent, under the impression which this reflection must produce, flee on the wings of faith, with his child, to the "fountain opened for sin and uncleanness," and seek for it the visible pledge of the invisible grace, which is able to save the soul. And having devoted it to Christ in this ordinance, how importunately and prayerfully solicitous will he be that the blessing symbolized may be actually bestowed!

2. Again, in baptism the parent gives his solemn pledge before God and the Church to bring up his child

in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Such a pledge uniformly is, or ought to be, exacted before administering baptism. It is on this condition that the Church grants it; and yet there is reason to fear that it is more lightly considered than any small promise made to a fellow-creature. But let us observe, that such an engagement is involved in the very nature of the transaction. This is its language: The parent offers his child to God; God accepts the offer, receives the child; and after affixing his sign to it, returns the child again into the hands of the parent, with an injunction similar to that of Pharaoh's daughter, "Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages." The transaction is something like the ceremony observed when a monarch visits some of his cities; the magistrates bring the keys of the city, present them to him in token of his being its liege lord, and receive them again from his hands in token of his perfect confidence in their loyalty and fidelity. As an indication of this, the practice observed in some Churches (and we think it a very laudable one), is to place the child in the arms of the officiating minister, who restores it after baptism into the hands of the parent. It is a great mistake to suppose that the parent never parts with the child—he has virtually surrendered and given him up to Christ; and if he receives him back again, it is with the impress of the solemn bargain and compact, that he is to train it up for God and for heaven. "Who are those with thee?" said Esau, pointing to his brother's children. And Jacob replied, "The children which God hath *graciously* given thy servant." Children are twice given; they are naturally given at their birth, and they are graciously given at their baptism. They are naturally

given, to be loved and cared for as our children; they are graciously given, to be treated as God's children, and trained up for glory.

3. Let me only add here, that such is the parental engagement in baptism, that if the child should perish through the default of parental instruction, of careful superintendence, and of good example, the blood of that child shall be required at the hand of the guilty parent.

Such, then, being the solemn responsibilities incurred, let professing parents be exhorted to present their children in the faith of God's promise, "I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed," and in prayer that the promise may be fulfilled. Let the act be performed spiritually and intelligently, with fervent gratitude to God for the privilege, and in the humble hope of gracious acceptance. And here let me quote, as worthy of imitation by all parents on such occasions, the language of one who, being dead, yet speaketh to us in his interesting diary, as given in his Memoirs—I refer to the Rev. John Macdonald of Calcutta.

"Sabbath, November 24.—This day, in the kind providence of God, have I been permitted and enabled to dedicate my little offspring to my covenant God in baptism; and for this I give thanks. O what a privilege is it! I trust I have had communion with the Lord in this deed, if ever I had it. Many encouragements have I felt, and no misgivings as to infant baptism in its faithful form. Yea, I praise God for such an ordinance. I know God's willingness to bless infants. I know that he did of old receive them into his covenant by seal. I know also that infants are capable of enjoying the blessings of the covenant of grace—that the want of faith in those who are incapable of faith is just as applicable to salvation as to baptism, and therefore constitutes

no argument against it. I believe that the seal of the covenant will be just as valid to the child when it afterwards believes, as if baptized when adult—that it is a great privilege to have it externally united with the Church, and for a parent to say, ‘This, my child, has been solemnly and publicly given to God—it is federally holy.’ I believe that the commission of Christ included the children of believers, and that the apostles baptized such; and I know that the holiest of men in all ages have had communion with their God in this ordinance. But why enlarge? O my Lord! I bless thee for saving me from falling into the cold and forbidding doctrines of antipædo-baptism! O give me grace to improve thine ordinance! Look in mercy on my little Catharine! O Spirit of the Lord! inhabit her, regenerate her! I have given her to thee—make her thine own! Bless mother, father, and daughter. O bless us! All glory be to God!”

The duties devolving on those who have received baptism for their children, are too well known to need repetition; though not, we regret to say, too commonly practised to require enforcement. The parent who has been admitted to this privilege is bound to act as the instructor of his children in the way of the Lord. His education, in other branches of knowledge, he may delegate to the public teacher; but he can on no account, without a dereliction of duty and breach of vows, transfer into the hands of a stranger the duty of religious instruction. It is his task to teach his children the doctrines and duties of Christianity, to instil into their youthful minds the principles of the blessed gospel, and lead them, as it were by the hand, in the paths of righteousness. From no other lips will divine instruction come with better effect than from those of a leal father and a loving mother. And the Scripture is as particular as to

the spirit and temper in which this instruction should be conveyed, as the fidelity of communication. "And ye, fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

But the functions of the parent do not cease when religious instruction is imparted. It is his business to see that the child, while under his care and authority, obeys these instructions in practice, and to enforce towards him that discipline, which when neglected, either from carelessness or foolish kindness, proves often as injurious to the young as undue severity. "He that spareth the rod hateth the child."

Above all, it is incumbent on the Christian parent to show his baptized children the copy of a holy and consistent example. If this is wanting, no instructions, however useful—no discipline, however faithful, will prove of any avail. The worship of God ought to be maintained regularly in the family, and no plea of inconvenience sustained for its neglect. The family of the Christian should be "a Church in the house." The 101st Psalm should form the rubric and pattern of every Christian householder: "I will sing of mercy and of judgment. I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. I will walk within my house with a perfect heart."

Ah! well would it be for the Church, and well for the interests of society, were those rules more strictly attended to, those duties more punctually observed! The abuse of baptism by many who receive it as carelessly as it is carelessly administered—the unholy, careless, godless lives led by those who have solemnly vowed to God in this service—what a handle have these given to the enemies of infant baptism! How ready are they to turn away from disgust at the baptized, to look with sus-

picion on the blessed ordinance which has been so shamefully abused! And thus the truth of God is wounded through our sides. At the same time, such controversies may be useful, by turning public attention to the subject, and by inducing professing Christians to be more attentive to the duties they owe to God and their children. We would conclude by appealing to every parent before us. As you would expect to thrive in time and to flourish through eternity—as you would lead a happy life and meet a peaceful death—as you would have your memories after death to be blessed and not blasted—as you would appear before God in peace, and answer to Him at the great day of judgment—as you would look for the blessed sentence, “Well done, good and faithful servant,”—we would obtest and beseech you to lay these things seriously to heart. May the God of all grace bless what has been spoken! And to His name be all the praise, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

APPENDIX.

NOTE A—P. 2.

JEWISH BAPTISM.

THE fact of its having been a practice among the ancient Jews, before the coming of Christ, to baptize, as well as circumcise, proselytes and their children, has been placed beyond all question by the learned researches of Lightfoot, Selden, and many others. Lightfoot, in his “*Harmonia Quatuor Evangelistarum*,” proves this by quotations from Maimonides; who, after observing that “the covenant is confirmed by circumcision, and baptism, and a voluntary offering,” adds: “A stranger who is circumcised and not baptized, or baptized and not circumcised, is not called a proselyte.” Quotations from other Jewish writers follow. “The foreigner who is circumcised and not baptized,” says Rabbi Eliezer, differing from the other, “is yet a proselyte; for this we gather from our fathers having been circumcised and yet not baptized.” Again: “He is a proselyte,” says Rabbi Jehoshua, “who is baptized, and yet not circumcised.”—(*Lightfoot, Op.*, tom. i. p. 390.) They differ on the question of its necessity to constitute a proselyte; all agree as to the commonness of the practice. The same writer proves that “the infants of proselytes were baptized, according to the judgment of the Sanhedrim.” Witsius refers those who wish for

further information on this subject to Selden, “*De Jure Naturæ et Gent.* ;” to Lightfoot, and to Altingius. And he adds, “Hence we may see how it happened that the Scribes and Pharisees are not said to have quarrelled with John as to his baptism, but only inquired by what and whose authority he baptized.—(John i. 25.) And hence the crowds that flocked to his baptism; for he was famous for his sanctity and doctrine; *he adopted no new rite*, and preached the approach of the kingdom of heaven, which was then expected. From that time baptism became a divine institution.”—(*Æcon. Fæd.*, lib. iv., cap. 16, 8.) “Hence we may observe, that a kind of *initiation by water* was long in use among the Jews, though it was not *sacramental* until Christ’s institution; yea, therefore, it may seem to have been used by them, because they expected it at the coming of the Messias, as appears by their coming to John, questioning not so much his baptism as his authority: ‘Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?’”—(*Godwyn’s Moses and Aaron*, lib. i., cap. 3.)

Wall has successfully proved the same point in the Introduction to his “*History of Infant Baptism* ;” in which, after showing that little children were made proselytes by baptism, together with their fathers, he notices the following curious facts:—“The natural Jews reckoned that neither they themselves nor their children did stand in any need of this baptism, never since the time when their whole nation, men, women, and infants, were baptized before the giving of the law. It was our Saviour who first ordered that every particular person, Jew or Gentile, or of whatever parents born, must be born again of water. As for the proselyte’s baptism, it was a rule among them, as Mr Selden shows, that it was never reiterated on him and his posterity; and Dr Lightfoot gives this as their rule: ‘The sons of proselytes *in following generations* were circumcised indeed, but not baptized, as being already Israelites.’” “An

Israelite," says Maimonides, "that takes a little heathen child and baptizes him for a proselyte—behold, he is a proselyte." "Another thing observable about the Jewish baptism of proselytes is this, that they called such an one's baptism his *new birth*, *regeneration*, or being *born again*. This was a very usual phrase with the Jews: 'If any one become a proselyte, he is like a child new born.'"

The idea started by Jennings (*Jewish Antiquities*, vol. i. p. 138), that the Jews may have borrowed this baptism from the Christians, is in the highest degree improbable. What rite have the Jews ever borrowed from Christians? Customs do not change so easily as doctrines; the Jews were proverbially tenacious of theirs, and it is surely much more reasonable to hold, with Lightfoot, that, as the enemies of Christianity, they would be more likely to drop than continue the ceremony, had it not been of a date prior to Christ, and that our Lord "took into his hands baptism such as he found it; adding only this, that he exalted it to a nobler purpose and a larger use."

It may be added, that though the Jewish writers referred to lived some centuries after Christ, yet as the days of Jewish proselytism had long gone by, the customs and rules which they record could only have existed in the days when the temple was in its glory, ere its "gates" had been overthrown, and its "sacrifice and oblation had been caused to cease."

NOTE B—P. 23.

BAPTISMAL REGENERATION.

THE latest edition of this doctrine is to be found in Archdeacon Wilberforce's treatise, "The Doctrine of Holy Baptism: with Remarks on the Rev. W. Goode's 'Effects of Infant Baptism.'" London, 1849. At pre-

sent, we shall merely give a specimen of his views of baptism, as the reader may be curious to see how a son of the venerable Wilberforce (*O quantum mutatus ab illo!*) contrives to reconcile baptismal regeneration with the gospel:—

“After man had lost that perfection in which he was originally created, his nature received a new beginning in that second Head, in whom all its principles were reconstructed. The regeneration of humanity, which began when the Eternal Word took our nature in the Virgin’s womb, was subsequently extended, through the power of the Holy Ghost, to all who by grace were made children of the new Adam. Thus was the whole constitution of our being to be renewed. Now, for the accomplishment of an object which was alien in this way from the course of nature, it was requisite that some means which nature did not supply should be adopted. For this reason was the system of the sacraments ordained, as being the means whereby the humanity of the Word should extend itself to others; so that men might hereby have the same relation to the second Adam which the course of nature gave them to the first. On this account is the gift of regeneration first bestowed in holy baptism; for then do we become members of Christ’s ‘body, of his flesh, and of his bones.’”—(P. 57.)

If my readers can understand this spiritual conundrum, it is more than I do. It seems a sort of hybrid between the fanaticism of Madame Bourignon and that of Popery. The “extension of the *regeneration of humanity* in the Eternal Word, *through the Holy Ghost*, to the children by grace of the new Adam,” savours strongly of the former; while “the *humanity* of the Word extending itself to others *through the sacraments*,” is pure Romanism. The curiosity is, that this theory is held in solution with a kind of spurious Evangelism. “The absolute necessity of conversion,” says Mr Wilberforce, “in no wise interferes with the reality of that gift of regeneration which is conferred in

baptism. All that is necessary is, to discriminate between that gift of a renewed nature, which God bestows in Christ upon those who are engrafted into his Son, and that principle of individual responsibility which must yield to the divine influence. And this is still more manifest in the case of faith. For what is religious faith but assent to the declarations of God, and appreciation of his nature? And what is Christian faith but the application of the same principle to that incarnate Mediator, through whom alone fallen man can approach the Father? It is a belief not in Christianity, but in Christ; it is not mere admiration of the excellence of the Christian system, but the casting ourselves upon that personal Restorer, through whom divine gifts flow forth into humanity. Conversion is the act by which the accountable principle in man obeys the suasion of those motives which incline it towards its Maker's service.—*So that, in an adult, conversion is essential to the efficacy, or perhaps it might almost be said to the completeness, of baptism.*"—(Pp. 47, 49.)

After such an admission, which comes round, though by a very different process, to all we contend for, it must be apparent that this new theory of baptismal regeneration has been devised merely with the view of reconciling the expressions in the formularies of the English Church with something approaching to Evangelical doctrine; or rather, from the difficulty, according to the Anglican system, of finding something for infant baptism to do. This is very apparent from the following questions: "The question is surely to be decided by the fact, whether infants are meet candidates for baptism. For if it does not please God to bestow those gifts of which their nature is susceptible, because they are prevented by the deficiency of their being from exercising such graces as belong to riper years, why should they be baptized at all? The objection therefore is really directed against infant baptism itself. That some changes *might* befall them even in their present state—that a dif-

ference obtains between ‘unclean’ and ‘holy’ children—that it is possible for them to participate in that renewal which Christ wrought in all the powers of man’s nature, has already been shown. *And if this blessing is not conferred upon them, why are they baptized at all?*”—(P. 52.) In this simple question we have the whole mystery of baptismal regeneration, as that dogma is held in the English Church, strikingly unfolded. The Anglican mind seems almost incapable of comprehending why baptism should be given at all, unless the mere outward act communicate some inward grace. The idea of the *federal holiness* of children, though the only feasible and tenable view, and that supported by the concurrent voice of all pure antiquity, never seems to enter their minds. They must either embrace, with Mr Wilberforce, the absurd notion of “the blessing of a re-created nature through baptismal union with the humanity of Christ,” or they must fly off, like Mr Baptist Noel, into a denial of all baptism to children! Even Mr Goode, the evangelical opponent of Mr Wilberforce, cannot escape from the notion that baptism is, in some sense, the vehicle of grace to the child of *believing* parents, and holds that “the efficaciousness of baptism depends on the prevision by God of future faith and repentance in the child at a subsequent period of life!”

The distinction attempted to be drawn by Mr Wilberforce between regeneration and conversion, leading him, as it does, to speak of the latter as the act of man obeying the suasion of those motives, and spontaneously improving and developing the seeds of that grace implanted in baptism, is, we need hardly say, nothing more than a new phase of old Arminianism.*

* This will be shown more fully in Note D.

NOTE C—P. 32.

DR CARSON AND THE WORD BAPTIZE.

AFTER the minute and masterly refutation of Dr Carson by Professor Wilson of Belfast, and the satisfactory answer which Dr Beecher of America has lately published in vindication of his first treatise against the cavils and objections of the same author, it would be altogether superfluous to enter here into any argument on the meaning of the Greek word *Baptize*. All that is intended in this note is to confirm what is alleged in the Lecture, in reference to the pervading fallacy of Dr Carson's treatises on this question. I shall not dwell on what must be called the unseemly dogmatism and arrogance of that writer. He has now "gone the way of all the earth;" and, while this consideration is fitted to hush the voice of personal censure, it is surely of more importance to ascertain wherein he deceived himself, so as to write with so much confidence, and to come forth in such a style of reiterated violence against every one that challenged his statements. His language in dealing with his opponents, so wholly unlike the courtesy observed in modern controversial war, rather resembles that of a man who feels himself insulted by our denying a self-evident proposition. Now, it may appear somewhat strange that this indignant style should have been assumed towards men of such undoubted learning and independence of thinking, as Mr Ewing, Dr Wardlaw, Dr Henderson, Dr Beecher, and others, not to speak of the whole army of lexicographers and philologists who have gone before him, and who, he confesses, are all against him. But this singular monomania about the word βαπτίζω, under which Dr Carson laboured, must have had some ostensible foundation. And it admits of being easily shown from his own writings, that the whole arose from the fallacy to which we have adverted in the

Lecture, of identifying the Greek and English terms as perfectly synonymous with each other. Take the following evidences:—

“The Holy Spirit uses the word βαπτίζω; and that word signifies to dip, and only to dip.”

“The word does not express the idea of washing, but has its own peculiar meaning of mode; the idea of washing being only a consequence of dipping.”

“In no language under heaven can one word designate two modes. Now we have the confession of our opponents themselves that βαπτίζω signifies to dip. If so, it cannot signify to pour or sprinkle.”

One would suppose that Dr Carson would rather have said, “If so, it cannot signify to *wash*.” For this is what *we* say it signifies. But this would not have served his purpose. He therefore insists on making us say what no man ever said—that the word signifies to pour or sprinkle. But in the next quotation he betrays his radical blunder.

“Suppose the language of inspiration *had been English*, and the command had been ‘dip the disciples in water,’ would we not believe that the apostles used the words in our sense of them? If any one should say that the phrase *dip in water* means *sprinkle with water*, would we not believe him deranged? Yet this in substance is the very thing that Mr Brown has said; for the word *baptizo* as *definitely expresses* immerse in Greek, as our word dip does in *English*.”

Need there be any wonder after this, at the pertinacity with which Dr Carson insisted on all bowing to his interpretation of the word? It was equivalent to him with seeing it written in English *dip in water*! And had all been able to see it thus written, the controversy would have been at an end. There would have been no occasion for his many canons of interpretation, so formidably paraded. But it is needless to say that this meaning, so quietly and confidently assumed, is the very point in dispute. We grant that “in no language

can one word designate two modes," and therefore we do *not* say what Dr Carson would make us say—that to *dip* can ever mean to *pour* or *sprinkle*; but we maintain, that in all languages words which primarily designated mode, came to be used in a *secondary* sense which had no reference to mode; and therefore we say, that the Greek word *baptizo* came to signify *washing*, without any reference to the mode of washing. But we deny that it is in this respect identical with the English word to *dip*, which never came to be used in the secondary sense of washing at all.

"Every language," says Dr Carson, "must have a word for *dipping*, a word for *pouring*, and a word for *sprinkling*, which can never be confounded."

Here, also, let us mark what has misled the good man. The Greek *baptizo* was obviously identified in his eyes with the English *dip*. He supposes first, that the Greeks had no other word for *dipping*; and secondly, that, as with our word *dip*, it never came to have any other than a modal signification, even when used with a secondary and figurative application. Both suppositions are gratuitous and unfounded. Dr Owen, than whom few were more qualified to judge, or cautious in stating his judgment on critical points, declares, in the most decided terms, that "*not one instance can be given in Scripture, wherein βαπτίζω doth necessarily signify to dip or plunge; for that, in Greek, is εμβάπτω and εμβάπτισμα. It nowhere signifies to dip, but as a mode of washing, or in order to wash.*" And on the other point, let us just look into the most learned expositions of the term. Thus, in Dr Robinson's *Lexicon* the meanings stand thus:—"To immerse—to sink—to cleanse by washing—to baptize." And in that of Anthimos Gazis, himself a Greek, and recognised as an authority by the Greek Church, it is:—"I dip down something into something—I wet—I wash—I bathe." Now, we would simply ask our readers to conceive how much they would be surprised were they to meet with

similar definitions of the word *dip* in an English dictionary. Do we find any of our English lexicographers informing us that *to dip* signifies “to wash,” or “cleanse by washing?” Let it be remembered that Dr Carson does not find fault with any of these definitions of the Greek word. All he maintains is, that the idea of *dipping* pervades all the secondary meanings of the term. This is obviously a mere delusion, arising from a gratuitous play upon the English word *dip*. Had *this* been the word employed, or had the word baptize in Greek been identical in meaning and use with our English *dip*, his inferences would have been perfectly logical and unanswerable. As it is, they are mere assumptions, without the slightest foundation.

I shall only add that nothing is more common, both in Hebrew and Greek, than the transition of the meaning of certain words from the primary sense, denoting mode, to a secondary, which has no reference to the mode originally signified. Thus the Hebrew word *mashah*, which originally signified to *rub over*, came from this to signify to *paint*, and thence again to *anoint*, by pouring or sprinkling, without any reference to rubbing over. Again, the Hebrew term *maleh* primarily signified to *fill*; but subsequently, because consecration to the priestly office was originally performed by filling the hand with the sacrifices, it came to signify to *consecrate*, without any reference to filling. In English, the phrase *to rub over* has never come to designate the act of anointing by pouring or sprinkling; nor has the word *fill*, by any chance, come to signify the act of consecration. Again, the Greek word προσκυνεω meant originally to crouch or fawn like a dog—then to do reverence by prostration, then by bending the body, then by merely bowing the head; and lastly, it assumed the general sense of *worship*, without reference to any external gesture. Our English word *crouch*, or *fawn*, never came to possess this signification. It is the same with the Greek word βαπτίζω, as we have shown in the Lecture.

NOTE D—P. 124.

ARCHDEACON WILBERFORCE'S MISREPRESENTATION OF LUTHER.

It is not our part to vindicate the language employed in the formularies of the Church of England in reference to baptism, nor to enter into the controversy now raging within its pale on the question, whether these were drawn up by their compilers in accordance with the doctrine of the other reformed Churches, or with that of the Church of Rome. We may be permitted, however, to express our contempt of the paltry ambition shown by what may be termed the Sacramentarian party in that communion, to isolate the English Church from all her sisters of the Reformation, and to boast of her retaining the "Catholic doctrine" of the middle ages. The Church of Rome, true to her creed, laughs at the spuriousness of a profession of catholicity which is contradicted by a life of schism; the Church of Christ, represented by all those portions of it that are built on the Rock of Scripture, may afford to smile in pity at its puerility. The infatuated eagerness of this party to lash themselves to the fire-ship of Rome, can only be equalled by their haughty rejection of all 'fraternity or conformity with our worthy reformers. It is, therefore, with no slight disgust that we mark the use which Archdeacon Wilberforce makes of the testimony of Luther. He affects reluctance to introduce the reformer at all, and actually apologises—yes—the Archdeacon of the East Riding feels himself obliged to make an apology for mentioning Martin Luther at all as an authority on this subject! "We are not concerned," says he, "with the views of those who are not regarded as authorities by our Church!"—(P. 68.) This might be allowed to pass as a piece of mere vapouring; but Mr Wilberforce attempts, notwithstanding, to secure the suffrage of Luther on his side. He quotes a few sentences from

his Homilies on baptism, which certainly look, as they stand apart from their contextual connection, to yield the whole point.—(Pp. 124, 125.) Now, we do not undertake to vindicate the language of Luther on all occasions; for it is well known that he is very unqualified in his statements, and that on the subject of the sacraments he went further in conformity to the language of Rome than the other reformers. But strong as his phraseology was, he never held the absurd dogma of baptismal regeneration. His profound convictions of sin, and his scriptural views of the method of free justification by faith, always brought him round to the right course at last, however far he might be driven out of his latitude by the violence of his controversial zeal. In addition to what is quoted in the Lectures, pp. 13, 124, we may give the following:—"Baptism justifies no man, nor does good to any, but faith in the word of promise, to which baptism is added. This it is that justifies, and fulfils what baptism signifies. *Faith is the submersion of the old man, and the emersion of the new man.*"—(De Captiv. Bab. Eccl. Scrip. Lat. tom. ii. p. 272, b. Jencœ, 1566.) In like manner, in his "Concio de Sacramento Baptismi," after speaking in strong terms of baptism as the laver of regeneration, he proceeds to guard himself against being supposed to ascribe the spiritual work to the outward element, by showing that man is only "sacramentally regenerated" in that ordinance, that God then "enters into a covenant with us," and that the meaning of the sign is, that we are bound to prosecute the work of sanctification, of which that was the symbolic commencement. With some confusion of thought, arising from his mode of stating the design of baptism, he comes to the conclusion, that the efficacy of baptism is not completed till the last day, and that it is only when we have departed from sin, and are mindful of our covenant with God, that we are warranted to say that we have received any spiritual benefit from our baptism.—(Scrip. Lat. vol. i. p. 319-323.)

We have less to do, however, with the vindication of Luther, than with the use made of his language in support of baptismal regeneration. In his Homilies on baptism, penned in the heat of his crusade against the German Anabaptists, who ridiculed the outward rite of infant baptism, the reformer spoke out strongly, keeping still in his eye the office of *faith* in looking beyond the symbol to the great Promiser and Baptizer. "You should not," says he, "regard the hand or mouth of the minister who baptizes—who pours over the body a little water, which he has taken in the hollow of his hand, and pronounces some few words (a thing slight and easy in itself, addressing itself only to the eyes and ears; and our blinded reason sees no more to be accomplished by the minister), but in all this you must behold and consider the word and work of God, by whose authority baptism is administered, who is its founder and author, yea, also is himself the Baptist." Very true, and exactly what we would say, and what we have said, to such as would speak disrespectfully of the outward rite. For, as Luther adds, "It is not his will to deal with us without external media, through unembodied secret inspirations and influences, or by any private and secret revelations." But what is the interpretation put on this by the Archdeacon? "The thing intended is," says he, "to set forth baptism as being in its own line the revealed medium through which spiritual influences descend from God to man, inasmuch as it is the declared instrument through which the gifts of mediation are extended to the children of the second Adam."—(P. 126.) Does the Archdeacon mean to hold, then, in plain language, that God makes the mere symbolic action of pouring water, and pronouncing words, over the child, the instrument of that child's regeneration? If so, Luther held no such nonsense; for, according to him, "the new creature is the work of the Holy Ghost, who cleanseth our heart by faith, and worketh the fear of God, love, chastity, and other Christian virtues;

that it is not the changing of garments and other outward things, but it is the renewing of the mind by the Holy Ghost, after the which followeth a change of the members and senses of the whole body.”—(Comment. on Galatians, vi. 15.) He may speak of our faith looking through the symbol of baptism to the great regenerator. “The minister’s agency is required,” he says; “his hand and mouth must be used in pouring out water and pronouncing words; but I ought to look, not at the visible, but the invisible Baptist, the author and founder of baptism.” This we can understand; but the idea of the mere pouring out of water and pronouncing of words, being the *instrument* by which the mind is renewed by the Holy Ghost, never, we believe, entered into Luther’s imagination. The truth is, the whole delusion lies in overlooking the symbolical character of the ordinance. Baptism may be called an instrument, but it is a symbolic instrument. God may employ the symbol of baptism, as well as that of the Supper, in conveying his grace to the souls of men; but it is not by imparting a regenerative virtue to the water of the one sacrament, any more than a confirmative virtue to the bread and wine of the other, or by making the water, any more than the bread and wine, the instrument of working on the soul. The mere washing in the one sacrament, and the mere eating and drinking in the other, can produce no moral or spiritual effects, unless viewed as moral and spiritual institutes, and improved by faith, which looks through the visible symbol to the invisible worker.

Misled by this delusion, the Archdeacon indulges in a most extraordinary style of reasoning, the drift of which is to show, that the baptismal regeneration of infants is necessary to a practical recognition of the divine influence in the salvation of men. “Now,” says he, “when we proceed to consider the effects of these spiritual gifts, as they manifest themselves in the receiver, it is clear that a second element must be taken into account; we have not only the agency of God, who

bestows gifts, but of man, who receives them. All the good actions of men are referable to the combined agency of these two principles Where an action is, in this way, the result of two combining influences, there is peculiar danger lest one element or the other should be overlooked. . . . And here it is that the regeneration of infants in baptism, supplies a test of such peculiar value. . . . Seeing that in their case the will of the human receiver is wholly inoperative, the benefit of the ordinance must fall entirely on the side of the Divine giver.”—(P. 127.) And so he proceeds to argue, that, by denying his theory, we are in danger of practically denying the divine agency, and, in short, falling into mere rationalism. Now we take leave, not only to disclaim this charge, but to retort it on our accuser. It is he, and such as he, that expose the doctrine of the divine influence to contempt, by their refined advocacy of vulgar superstition. Here, again, we may mark the same fatal delusion. Had Mr Wilberforce contented himself with showing, that in the baptism of infants we have a sacred and instructive symbol of regeneration, as the work of God alone, a work in which God is the sole agent, and man is merely the recipient, he would have stated the real truth, after which he seems groping in the dark. But, by identifying baptism with regeneration, he in point of fact reverses the truth, and divests the Almighty of all share in the spiritual work. Regeneration is surely a moral and spiritual, and not a physical or carnal, change. Wherever it is bestowed it must be attended with spiritual effects on the regenerated. We cannot conceive of God working on the soul of man without the production of corresponding action on the part of man. “It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.” The “willing and doing” is the result of divine influence, not any influence of itself independent of Divine agency. But, according to the Archdeacon’s theory, the work of conversion, is “the result of two combining influences,”

—the influence of God and of man ; the Divine influence being entirely confined to that indescribable afflatus conveyed to the unconscious child by the words and water of baptism, which remains useless and inoperative till man brings his influence to bear upon it ! This shutting up of the regenerating Spirit to the mere manipulation and formulary of baptism—this miserable identifying of water with grace, as if God could not regenerate until *we* baptize, and must regenerate all whom we baptize ; while yet the person regenerated may never be converted, or, if converted, may thank his own will and deed for it—most plainly leads to an utter practical divorcement of the grace of God from the sinner's salvation. Earnestly speculative men, such as the Archdeacon, may work themselves into the belief that they are really pleading the cause of spiritual religion by these ingenious sophistries ; but what must the effect be on the minds of the people at large, when told that every child baptized has been regenerated to God ?

It is high time, surely, that this bastard spiritualism, leading, as it does, to the grossest superstition and the most fatal practical deceit that can be practised on the souls of men, should be exposed and put down. Let the Church of England rise in her might, and by one generous and gigantic effort, shake herself loose of this hydra-headed gorgon of baptismal regeneration. Let a reformed Parliament set its seal on a reformed Church ; and let those men who are stealthily employing the influence and emoluments which she confers on them to betray her to the Church of Rome, seek refuge, with their mummery and mysticism, within the pale of that Church, to which their affections and their arguments point with equal decidedness. In the name of God let there be a separation, and let it begin, not on the side of Belial, but of Christ. Let the money-changers be expelled from the temple. Let the traitors be driven out of the camp. For what communion hath light with darkness ? and

what concord hath Christ with Belial? and what agreement hath THE TEMPLE OF GOD with IDOLS?

NOTE E—P. 72.

THE HON. AND REV. B. NOEL'S ESSAY ON CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

WE propose nothing like a review of Mr Noel's Essay. He has been sufficiently reviewed already, in various quarters, to his heart's content. The Baptists themselves must feel disappointed in the appearance made by their advocate. They may be proud of their convert; but they must, we should think, be somewhat ashamed of his confession. Had Mr Noel consulted some of the ordinary Baptist treatises before coming forth with his own, he might have found some ready-made reasons, much more ingeniously constructed than those which he has been at the pains to manufacture for himself. But, it seems, he "determined to form his judgment entirely by the study of the Scriptures, and of such authors as advocate the baptism of infants, not having read a single Baptist book or tract." Mr Noel, however, has been placed in a very unfavourable position for giving "an independent testimony" on the subject. On looking over the list of the authors whom he has consulted on the Pædobaptist side, we find that, without exception, they are either Episcopalians or Independents. Not a single Presbyterian work appears to have come into his hands. He does not seem to have seen even Williams of England, or Miller of America, not to speak of our older Puritan writers, and our approved systems of theology, foreign and domestic. When it is considered that the views held on baptism by Presbyterians, are identical with those of the Reformers and of the most distinguished divines in the reformed Churches at home and abroad, and that we regard the grounds on which many in the Church of England and among Congregational dissenters plead for infant baptism, as insufficient

and untenable, we must be permitted to say that Mr Noel has, in our opinion, taken a very “partial and one-sided view of the question.”

The dominant idea of Mr Noel’s “Essay on Christian Baptism” is, that faith and repentance must precede the administration of the rite. It is surprising, that while quoting so many Pædobaptist writers as witnesses in favour of this general position, it should never have occurred to him, that the very fact of their yielding this point, and yet in spite of it pleading for the admission of children, furnishes the strongest evidence in favour of that practice; inasmuch as it shows that these men saw no inconsistency between their practice and the maintenance of that proposition, and that, granting all that Mr Noel pleads for, they still found warrant in Scripture for the admission of children. We must say, however, that we were surprised to find Calvin quoted as using the following language in reference to the commission in Matt. xxviii. 19: “But since Christ orders to teach before baptizing, and wills that believers alone be admitted to baptism, baptism seems not to be rightly administered unless faith has preceded. And properly is faith in the Word placed before baptism, since the Gentiles were wholly alienated from God, nor had any thing in common with the elect people; otherwise the figure would be mendacious, offering remission of sins and the gift of the Spirit to unbelievers, who were not as yet members of Christ.”—(*Noel on Baptism*, p. 26.) These sentences as they stood, sounded so unlike Calvin’s well-known sentiments and practice, that, notwithstanding the original Latin given at the foot of the page to verify it, we could not be satisfied without turning up the passage in the works of the reformer. And there to be sure we found that, so far from witnessing for the Baptists, as one would imagine from the mode in which Mr Noel has abridged him, Calvin is in fact speaking against the Baptists, and showing that this passage cannot avail them. After the

words given by Mr Noel, which express the *objection* taken by our opponents, "But since Christ orders to teach before baptizing, and wills that believers alone be admitted to baptism, baptism seems (or appears) not to be rightly administered unless faith has preceded"—Calvin adds, "On this pretence the *Anabaptists have stormed greatly against infant baptism*. But the reply is not difficult, if we attend to the reason of the command. Christ orders them to convey to *all nations* the message of eternal salvation, and confirms it by adding the seal of baptism. Now, it was proper that faith in the Word should be placed before baptism, since the Gentiles were wholly alienated from God, and had nothing in common with the chosen people; for otherwise it would have been a mendacious figure which offered forgiveness and the gift of the Spirit to unbelievers, who were not yet members of Christ. But we know that by faith those (Gentiles) who were formerly despised are united to the people of God." Mr Noel might not approve of Calvin's interpretation; but he was hardly entitled to quote him in such a way as to make him appear to favour the very party he meant to condemn. Calvin appears to have had in his eye the language of Peter, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the gift of the Holy Ghost as well as we?" (Acts x. 47), which cannot be understood as implying that none were to be baptized but those who had received the Holy Ghost—for many had been baptized among the Jews without having received that extraordinary gift—but as meaning, that "because on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost" (verse 45), therefore they were now admissible into the Christian Church, and publicly declared to be so as well as the Jews. Hence we learn (chap xi. 18), "When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life"—not to all the Gentiles, or to those Gentiles

in particular merely, but to Gentiles as such, as well as the Jews. There may be a difference of opinion as to Calvin's view of the passage in question, but none as to the fact on which he bases it.

NOTE F—P. 130.

BUNYAN AND HIS BAPTISM.

It is worthy of notice, that while the famous John Bunyan was induced, from the circumstances attending his conversion, to adjoin himself to the Baptist communion, there is nothing in his numerous writings from which this fact would have been discovered. Even in his inimitable "Pilgrim's Progress" we detect nothing of the kind. It may be fairly presumed, that if Bunyan had laid as much weight on baptism in adult years as some others, Christian would have been counselled by Evangelist, upon his conversion, to obtain immersion in some stream by the way. He made no distinction, in admitting to his Church, between those baptized in infancy or in maturity. What is more, we never hear him alluding to his own baptism. He appears to have considered its effects as all fully reached and realized in the Lord's Supper; or like Luther, to whom in some parts of his character he bore a striking resemblance, he seems to have regarded the life of faith as constituting the genuine "submersion of the old man and emersion of the new." "He did not think it necessary to mention his baptism," observes one of his biographers. "He passes by his initiation in the river Ouse; but in reference to the sacrament of the Supper, he exclaims, 'That Scripture, *Do this in remembrance of me*, was made a very precious word to me when I thought of that blessed ordinance, the Last Supper; for by it the Lord did come down upon my conscience, with the discovery of his death for my sins, and, as I then felt, *plunged* me into the virtue of the same.' There seems

to me, in this passage, an intended use of terms which should express the views of both classes in his Church on the mode of baptism ; and yet remind both, at the same time, that neither mode was the meaning or the *exact* emblem of being buried with Christ by baptism unto death. It is an illustration of his favourite doctrine, ‘ That Jesus Christ is looked upon by God, and should be looked upon by us, as that public Person (or Representative) in whom the whole body of his elect are always to be considered and reckoned as having died with him and risen from the dead with him,’ not when they were baptized, but as Bunyan expresses it, ‘ When he died *we* died, and so of his resurrection.’—(Philip’s *Life of Bunyan*, p. 207.)

THE END.

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